

GRAMOPHONE

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OCTOBER 2009

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

DOMINGO HIS GREATEST CHALLENGE YET

The 'supertenor' on turning baritone for Verdi's killer role

PLUS INSPIRED BY PLÁCIDO...

Otello – by Gerald Finley
Canio – by Rolando Villazón
Hoffmann – by Carol Vaness

★ Five must-have Domingo recordings

MY MUSIC – ALEC BALDWIN

Being a classical music radio presenter is the actor's dream job

SANDRINE PIAU

The French soprano records lost Britten

RACHEL PODGER

To the violinist, audience reactions are more useful than the critics

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September highlights from EMI and Virgin Classics



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SPOTLIGHT



Verdi: Messa da Requiem

Antonio Pappano

Music Director Antonio Pappano leads his Orchestra e Coro dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia in a powerful performance of Verdi's Requiem. The work, commemorating the life of the great Italian novelist, poet and statesman Alessandro Manzoni, is recorded in concert with stellar soloists Anja Harteros, Sonia Ganassi, Rolando Villazón and René Pape. Pappano said, "Italians' relationship to religion is explosive, full of temperament, full of fear. I love doing this piece here in Rome with an Italian orchestra and chorus. They have an innate sense of what this music is about, how to bring it to life."

"A performance of enthralling beauty and visceral thrills"
The Sunday Times

ALSO NEW THIS MONTH

Sarah Chang



Sarah Chang has recorded the Brahms Violin Concerto, one of the summits of a violinist's recording career, with Kurt Masur and the Dresdner Philharmonie.

The coupling is the ever-popular Bruch G minor concerto.

Simon Rattle



Brahms symphonies by Simon Rattle and the Berliner Philharmoniker. "Sir Simon has finally dared to tackle Brahms with the Berliner Philharmoniker.

He combines Furtwängler's monumentality with Karajan's beautiful sound." (*Die Zeit*)

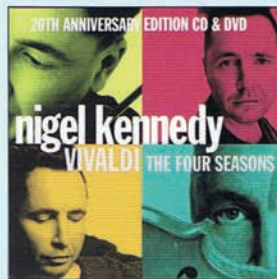
Emmanuelle Haïm



Continuing the Handel series from *Le Concert d'Astrée* and Emmanuelle Haïm, *La resurrezione* recounts the events of Easter. The soloists are

Camilla Tilling, Kate Royal, Toby Spence, Sonia Prina and Luca Pisaroni.

Nigel Kennedy



EMI Classics celebrates the 20th anniversary of Nigel Kennedy's landmark Vivaldi *Four Seasons* recording with a special edition comprising the original recording, an award-winning film and a specially-written account of events surrounding the 1989 release.

ICONS



Stokowski, Menuhin & Grappelli, Nathan Milstein and Lucia Popp.

ICON releases this month pay homage to six great recording artists of the recent past. Enjoy multiple CD sets devoted to Richard Tauber, Leopold

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by Grainger, Britten and Stanford, Victorian ballads, Sousa marches and Smetana's *Má vlast*.

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www.emiclassics.co.uk

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As world-revered "supertenor" Plácido Domingo embarks on his newest challenge – the baritone title-role of *Simon Boccanegra* – we take stock of an astonishing career. John Steane surveys the last 15 years of recordings, famous colleagues share the performances that most influenced them and, in a rare interview, we talk to the man himself

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Salonen conducts
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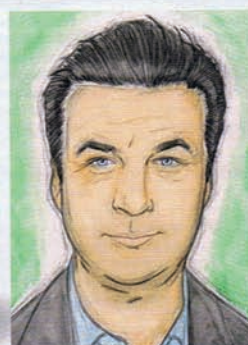
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Wireless magic



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Alec
Baldwin's
musical
passions



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Coraggio!

As a dedicated Domingo fan, I've been looking forward to this issue. Ever since we heard that the one-time baritone (well, sort of, as he clarifies in the interview) was to take a giant leap of faith and return to the lower voice-category to essay a Verdi role, I've been fascinated to understand what has driven him to make this brave decision.

After all, when you're the world's most revered tenor, why put your neck on the line? Let's be clear. This isn't just some short, showy turn. *Tosca's* Scarpia, for instance, is brief and flash. But Domingo is to play Verdi's Simon Boccanegra. I use the word "play" rather than "sing" advisedly. There are few baritone roles by this composer that so test a singer's acting prowess, or for that matter that so demand maximum expressivity across the vocal range. Only Rigoletto and Falstaff match it – and Boccanegra is far more subtle and therefore harder than either of those.

The pirate turned reluctant political leader is a tragic and yet complex figure. His various cares, a dead lover, a lost daughter, a divided society, the father figure who hates him, weigh heavily and yet he continues to strive. Verdi himself felt many of these same concerns. He had lost children and a wife, had become a divisive figure in his home town and had been reluctantly drawn into politics as he dreamt of a united Italy. His preoccupations were not to be easily salved and so it is with his hero. Anyone hoping to triumph as Boccanegra must do so on the character's own terms – with intelligence, with total commitment and with consummate skill. Anything less and it will be a resounding failure.

So the stakes are as high as they have ever been for Plácido Domingo who, at the age of 68, continues to test new ground. Read how he plans to tackle this difficult role in our exclusive interview by the journalist who has followed him more closely than any other, Harvey Sachs. And the likes of John Steane, Thomas Hampson and Rolando Villazón weigh in on a Domingo special issue that I hope does justice to a truly great singer.

At the end of some features you'll see the line, "Visit gramophone.net/more". Tap that URL into your computer to find a page with relevant links to articles from *Gramophone's* past. So, for instance, an article on a singer will furnish you with links to a previous interview with the singer, perhaps something they may have written for the magazine and of course a classic CD review or two. It's all part of making the *Gramophone* experience ever richer!

James

james.inverne@haymarket.com

CONTRIBUTORS



Perhaps no journalist knows Plácido Domingo as well as **HARVEY SACHS**. The leading scholar worked with him on his autobiography and in this issue interviews Domingo on his latest (greatest?) challenge, exclusively for *Gramophone*.



RACHEL PODGER is one of the world's most popular violinists. In this issue, as her latest disc comes out on Channel Classics, she writes our Diary page and reflects on the way a contented life can benefit her music-making.



For this month's cover, illustrator **BRUCE EMMETT** researched both the dress of Boccanegra's time and stagings of the opera to blend accuracy and theatricality. "Domingo has a great face for a painting," he says. "So much character."



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Violin concertos

Chloë Hanslip

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Andrew Mogrelia

JENŐ HUBAY
Violin Concertos

Chloë Hanslip
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Andrew Mogrelia



8.572078

The stunning new release from the musician "likely to become the greatest violinist of her generation" (LimeLight) features the rapturous and elegiac Violin Concertos 1 & 2 by Hungarian virtuoso composer Jeno Hubay, in a superb collaboration with the Bournemouth Symphony orchestra conducted by Andrew Mogrelia.

Letters

Letter of the month

Detective Tully

In your September editorial you draw our attention to Tully Potter's article on the Giulini Verdi Requiem. Your description of it as an utterly absorbing piece of detective work was no exaggeration. It makes fascinating reading and, as a bonus, offers readers the opportunity to do some detective work of their own and look for clues regarding Mr Potter's possible prejudices and dislikes. That apart, surely this opens up the possibility of a whole series of such exposures in which other classics such as the Leinsdorf *Turandot* of 1959, the Karajan *Carmen* of 1963 or the Beecham *Bohème* of 1956 could be investigated. There must be some chorus and orchestra members still alive who would be willing, and able, to spill beans and dig dirt, to reveal the tensions and bitchery which may have been present at the sessions! Legendary producers such as Richard Mohr, John Culshaw and Victor Olof might be shown to be only human after all, and to have feet of clay. A further benefit of the series might be to make these elderly recordings more relevant to listeners today.

Fintan Moran, via e-mail



Giulini's Requiem revealed



EVOKE Mio has reused a few design ideas from the 1950s, updated the technology and added a PURE twist, resulting in a radio that is as cute as it gets. More than just a design exercise, Mio sounds fantastic too. A classic easy-to-use radio, Mio also includes an input for your iPod/MP3 player, Intellitext® and textSCAN™, FM with RDS, a striking new auto-dimming Organic LED display, an alarm, a kitchen timer and a USB connector for future product upgrades. Not forgetting that it comes complete with a removable ChargePAK pre-installed for up to 24 hours' portable listening. www.pure.com RRP £150



Callas's quip

Tully Potter's background revelations to the 1963 Giulini recording of the Verdi Requiem were fascinating; it's always interesting to know what goes on. But his bracketed reference to Maria Callas could have said more. As is quite well known, Schwarzkopf rather maliciously suggested to her husband that Callas sing the mezzo part, thereby making the Greek soprano *secunda donna* to her *prima*. Callas's immediate answer, quoted in Peter Andry's recent book *Inside the Recording Studio*, was "If she can sing my repertoire, then I can sing hers". Her Mozart recital disc, produced by Michel Glotz, followed within the year; not her finest hour, perhaps, but welcome all the same.

John Pettitt

Keighley, West Yorkshire, UK

Challenging champion

I am sure others will pay tribute to Sir Edward Downes's work for Verdi and Russian opera (obituary, September, page 8), but I want to acknowledge the great service he did in accepting Peter Maxwell Davies's first and greatest opera, *Taverner*, for performance at Covent Garden, conducting the premiere and also

a revival. At the time some people were calling the work unperformable – as had happened with *Wozzeck* 50 years earlier. Downes achieved a powerful and eloquent performance of a haunting work which has stayed in the memory. As there is no commercial recording, it would be fitting to issue one of the two performances which were broadcast, either on the Royal Opera House Heritage label or on NMC.

Stephen Barber

Carterton, Oxon, UK

Avison anniversary

The article by Jeremy Nicholas on the "forgotten" composer anniversaries (August, page 42) was most interesting and apposite; of the four composers he mentions, three (Wood, Ketèlbey and Mayerl) feature heavily in my own vintage record collection and represent that (to me) lost and much-lamented wide range of English light music still loved by many. The fourth, Lemare, has had a couple of works recorded on the Australian Move label which we import to the UK and USA. However, it was a surprise not to see in this list mention of perhaps the most important composer needing to be revisited this year – Charles Avison,

who died in 1709 and much of whose work was rediscovered in the last decade or two (and has been recorded and released on Divine Art and Naxos).

Stephen Sutton

Divine Art Group, Co Durham, UK

Fewer than you think

Charlotte Gardner (Crunch time for culture, August, page 26) is seriously barking up the wrong tree if she thinks there are "at least 67" symphony orchestras in the UK. While there are indeed 65 orchestras affiliated to the ABO, only 15 of these, comprising 10 independent symphony orchestras and five BBC orchestras, would be categorised as "symphony orchestras". The remainder are



Avison: another anniversary

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chamber orchestras or opera/ballet orchestras.

Mark Pemberton

Director, Association of British Orchestras

Charlotte Gardner's "Crunch time for culture" was inevitably thought-provoking. As in previous downturns we're seeing orchestral managers being forced to think creatively and cut costs. But the business model which professional British orchestras operate with may itself be the problem; orchestras retain extremely well qualified musicians and pay them a decent but not great salary and so managers do everything they can to raise enough income to pay for that workforce. Audiences also attend dozens of concerts given by amateur and community orchestras which may be lower in quality but have significantly lower overheads.

Although there is a good appetite for live orchestral music, maybe some of our orchestras are in the wrong place, competing for ticket sales just to make ends meet. It might therefore make sense to spread orchestras out more – build loyal followings in towns and cities that don't currently have professional orchestras. But that also ignores an underlying chicken-and-egg question: are orchestras there to provide work for musicians, or are they providing a service to a concertgoing, CD-buying public? As a practising amateur musician and CD buyer but rarer concertgoer, I would like the answer to be "both"!

Jonathan Stoneman

Via e-mail

Kennedy's legacy

I read with interest your article on the legacy of Nigel Kennedy (August, page 28) but came to a different conclusion from that of your commentators.

I worked on the EMI recording of *The Four Seasons* in 1989 as the press and promotions manager for EMI Classics. The campaign was in fact a twin one between the classical division and the strategic marketing division of EMI UK. *The Four Seasons* sold in such large numbers because the marketing campaign was a purely pop one embracing media such as Radios 1 and 2, and television programmes (including *Wogan* and *The Gloria Hunniford Show*). Perhaps the pop side of

the campaign is best illustrated by the decision to release the last movement of *Summer* in the month preceding the full album's release to radio stations and to press. This worked because *Summer* was around three minutes long, the ideal time for a pop single to get airplay.

The Kennedy recording spearheaded a range of releases including the first "Three Tenors" in 1990. The use of "Nessun dorma" as the signature tune for World Cup raised awareness of classical music to a large (and new) audience. Further pop marketing techniques included non-specialist retailers (WH Smiths, Woolworths) being targeted to stock the recordings, increasing sales potential and media awareness.

This non-traditional way of marketing classical recordings by major companies led to a restructuring of their classical divisions. Staff who had experience in marketing or PR (but not in classical music) were employed to find ways of marketing a classical recording to a wider audience. This is still in place today.

Marius Carboni, Carboni Classical Media
Sevenoaks, Kent, UK

Grofé underestimation

David Threasher's Top 10 One-Hit Wonders (August, page 17) perhaps underestimates Ferde Grofé, who arguably had a hit on his own, at least here in the US. The "On the Trail" movement from *Grand Canyon Suite* was quite inescapable in the mid-1900s, even used as a theme for Philip Morris cigarette radio shows. But it is true, his excellent orchestrations won the day.

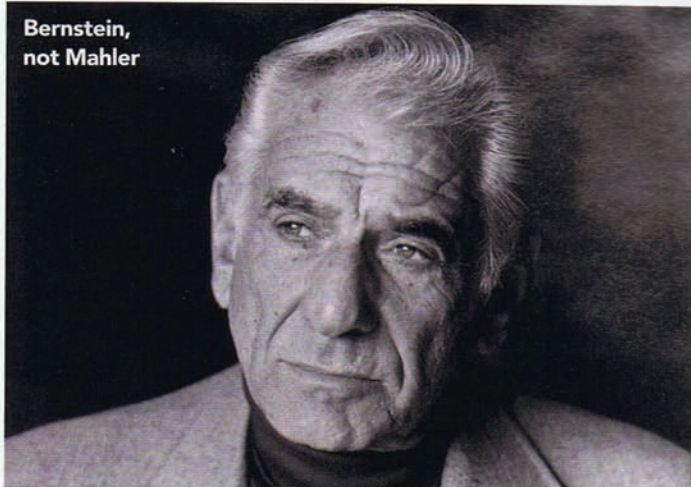
Hugh Trutten

Sonoma, USA

Lenny appeal

It's tough to top Simon Rattle's comment on Leonard Bernstein in an interview from *Gramophone*. His recording of *Wonderful Town* was about to come out (a joyous work written on a ridiculously short deadline that didn't give Bernstein a moment's time to over-compose). To paraphrase Rattle, "Lenny's great tragedy was that although he could do almost anything musically, the single thing he most wanted to do was the single thing he was unable to do: write his own

Bernstein, not Mahler



Mahler symphony." And *Mass* shows his limitations all too clearly: pretentious when he attempts to plumb the depths and cute (even cutesy-wootsy) when it reaches for musical joy/epiphany.

A friend, who was able to watch Bernstein over a number of years at Tanglewood, mentioned how alarmingly his performances would change depending on how his own composing was going. When things were not going well we'd have that curious hybrid that splits so many admirers of Bernstein the conductor: Bernstein/Beethoven or Bernstein/Mahler, etc (interestingly, Haydn was largely immune from these mood-swings). In a way, *Mass* and the symphonies are also a hybrid: Bernstein/Bernstein, the product of a man watching himself too closely. I much prefer Leonard Bernstein, even Lenny; the man who gave us *Wonderful Town*, *Serenade*, *Candide* and (a bit of a surprise to myself here) the *White House Cantata*.

Michael A Kaplan

New York, USA

Editorial notes

Peter Dickinson writes: John Steane (September, page 78) refers to Trevor Hold's obviously incomplete book on English song which fails to mention Lennox Berkeley. A far more reliable study is the one by Stephen Banfield (*Sensibility and English Song*; Cambridge: 1995) in which he says: "Berkeley's acceptance and furtherance of a fundamentally traditional song-maker's craft places him and not Britten most directly in the post-war line of succession of English song."

Jeremy Nicholas writes: In my review of Cherkassky's BBC Legends recital (August, page 68), I referred to "the Rachmaninov transcription...new to the pianist's discography". In fact the transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Berceuse*, Op 16 No 1, is not by Rachmaninov as stated in the track-listing but the rarely played, much earlier one by Paul Pabst (1854-97). My thanks to Donald Manildi for drawing my attention to this.

The review of John Potter's book *Tenor: History of a Voice* (September, page 105), was by John Steane, whose name was omitted.

July competition

The covermount competition in our Proms issue asked you to identify the link between seven performances and name the works. The works were Brahms's Piano Quintet with the Takács Quartet; Liszt's Mephisto Waltz No 1, "Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke", S514; Sullivan's "The Lost Chord" sung by tenor Robert White; Chopin's Ballade No 3 in A flat, Op 47; Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 32 in C minor, Op 111; the opening of Piano Concerto No 2 in G minor, Op 22, by Saint-Saëns; and the Liszt/Busoni Fantasia on two themes from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, all on Hyperion.

The link was the pianist on all seven excerpts, Proms issue guest editor (and *Gramophone* Gold Disc winner) Stephen Hough. A dozen discs go to Kevin O'Hare of Glasgow.

OBITUARIES

DAVID DREW musicologist

Born September 19, 1930; died July 25 2009



David's influence over musical life, not only in Britain, was immeasurable. He championed the work of composers young, old, unknown, famous and forgotten. As a music critic, at the *New Statesman* (1959-67), then as the editor of *Tempo* (1971-92), and writing for many other scholarly journals, David had the same generosity of spirit and intellectual curiosity that were characteristic

of his work as a publisher, record producer and editor.

David was born in Putney, south west London, and educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he befriended the Catalan composer Roberto Gerhard. He was also fascinated by the music of Messiaen, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Milhaud. Almost coincidentally, he became involved with the music of Kurt Weill, working tirelessly to locate manuscripts, oversee publications and recordings. His *Kurt Weill - A Handbook* (1987) remains the single most important volume published on the composer. When she first met him, Lotte Lenya described David as "A dream of a guy, young, witty and extremely clever". **Patrick O'Connor**

ROBERT HILFERTY arts critic

Born December 14, 1959; died July 24, 2009



The American arts critic and *Gramophone* contributor Robert Hilferty, was a consummate and gregarious native New Yorker, with a love of the arts and culture that regularly took him around the globe; he filed pieces from such far-flung locations as St Lucia, Brazil, Vienna, Spain and Morocco. He wrote elegantly and knowledgeably about a wide artistic array and his

is work was filled with his trademark exuberance and sly wit; he named a recently launched blog www.thehilfertyharangue.com.

Robert was also a longtime and impassioned supporter of the AIDS activism group Act-Up. He directed a controversial short documentary *Stop the Church*, about a 1989 Act-Up demonstration that took place at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Robert also wrote for a broad range of American publications that included the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, *New York Magazine*, and *The Advocate*. Most recently, he was an arts critic for Bloomberg News.

Anastasia Tsioulcas

MICHAEL STEINBERG music critic

Born October 4, 1928; died July 26, 2009



One of the most influential, widely read, and celebrated of all American music critics, Steinberg possessed an unsurpassable erudition and an extraordinary talent for synthesising materials from across the spectrum of artistic disciplines. The author of four books, he was a mentor to generations of younger music critics, as well as musicians, audiences and arts educators.

Born in Germany, educated at Princeton and the recipient of a Fulbright Award, he served as head of the Manhattan School of Music's music history department, music critic at *The Boston Globe*, as well as artistic advisor and publications director of several US orchestras. Though he formally retired in 1999, he continued to write for the San Francisco Symphony and coach students at music festivals. **Anastasia Tsioulcas**

ANNE COLLINS contralto

Born August 29 1943; died July 15, 2009



There aren't many singers who can claim to have been equally successful in Wagner and in Gilbert and Sullivan, to have been English National Opera's regular Erda as well as its Katisha. Anne Collins proved to be one of the most characterful and, within the limits of her voice type, versatile, singers of her generation – and if, vocally, she sometimes seemed to be singing to us from an earlier era, that's because she was what is

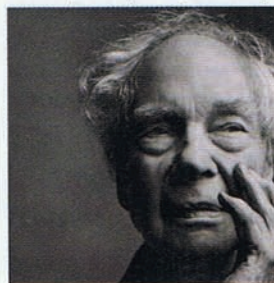
now a rare thing, a true contralto.

Born in Durham, she studied at the Royal College of Music and started her musical life as a cellist (a skill she would later show off on stage when she played Lady Jane – one of a gallery of G&S successes – in a classic production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* for ENO, happily captured on film). She joined the now-famous ensemble at ENO in the 1970's, a time when she would sing alongside the likes of Norman Bailey and Rita Hunter. Indeed, she was the Erda (with Bailey her usual Wotan) of choice when Reginald Goodall conducted his great *Ring* cycles on stage and on record (a portrayal of which Gramophone noted, "Anne Collins understands Erda's authoritative, even formidable, quality"). Throughout this period she would also sing contemporary opera (enjoying success in Tippett, Nino Rota and Henze among others – and later, in 1996, she appeared in another modern opera, the premiere of James MacMillan's *Inès de Castro*) and was twice the star soloist for the Last Night of the Proms.

Her fruity contralto sound was ideal for portraying vivid characterisations, as were her dramatic instincts. So she became a natural for important character roles, playing and recording Auntie in Britten's *Peter Grimes*, for instance, and singing the likes of Mary in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and the Mother in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (all of three performed at Covent Garden). **James Inverne**

MERCE CUNNINGHAM choreographer

Born April 16, 1919; died July 26, 2009



Merce Cunningham was born in Centralia, Washington. He declined to follow his brothers into a legal career and instead studied dance in Seattle, where he was spotted by Martha Graham in whose company he danced from 1939. He formed the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) in 1953 while teaching at Black Mountain College, North Carolina. The company's ethos reflected Cunningham's

radical approach to space, time and technology, freeing dance from music and narrative, with his partner John Cage's experimental ideas having a profound influence.

Cunningham continued working, appearing in every MCDC production until he was 70, and last danced at the age of 80. He recently celebrated his 90th birthday with a new work, *Nearly Ninety*, which was premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with music by John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin.

Cunningham sought collaborations with artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol; after Cage's death in 1992 the MCDC's musical directors included David Tudor and Takehisa Kosugi. The company has commissioned more works from contemporary composers than any other dance group: its repertoire includes works by musicians ranging from Gordon Mumma and Gavin Bryars to Sonic Youth. **David Threasher**

The CLASSIC fm GRAMOPHONE Awards 2009

THE GRAMOPHONE AWARDS

A glance at the Awards nominations, revealed this issue, is enough to see what a strong year it has been in terms of high-quality recordings. Gramophone's critics have had a tough time deciding who should walk away from the October 2 ceremony with the classical music world's most coveted prizes.

Don't miss our special issue to find out who prevails, as well as the results of your vote for Artist of the Year. Read our experts' commentary and interviews with the winners. And discover who triumphs with the most prestigious prize of all, Recording of the Year.

Also in the Awards issue:

- Reviewed – major new releases from Simon Rattle, Renée Fleming and Mariss Jansons
- *The Gramophone Collection* – Rachmaninov's entrancing *The Bells* was one of the composer's favourites among his own works. Rachmaninov biographer Geoffrey Norris hunts for the finest version on disc
- Iconic singer-songwriter Sting reveals his classical passions in *My Music*

ON SALE OCTOBER 3



soprano



A GREAT FAVOURITE among opera audiences, Cheryl Barker has achieved celebrated status around the world for her artistry in a diverse range of roles, admirably represented on this disc.

Featuring Arias from *The Queen of Spades*, *Pagliacci*, *Arabella*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and *The Violins of St Jacques*.

Cheryl Barker also appears in:
Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* (CHAN 3138(2)) and
Katya Kabanova (CHAN 3145(2))
and Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* on Chandos Opera in English.

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Editor's Choice



James Inverne's pick of this month's most outstanding new discs – you can hear excerpts on this month's free CD

DOMINGO IN CHARACTER
ARIAS FROM THE TENOR'S GREAT ROLES, CHOSEN BY ROLANDO VILLAZÓN • THOMAS HAMPSON • GERALD FINLEY • CAROL VANESS • CHERYL STUDER

PLUS MUSIC EXCERPTS FROM THE MONTH'S BEST DISCS, INCLUDING
RACHEL PODGER • NIKOLAUS HARNONCOURT • VERONIQUE GENÈS • LEONIDAS KAVAKOS

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL CD FEATURE

TRACKS

1-5

DOMINGO IN CHARACTER

Hear arias from some of Plácido Domingo's great interpretations, as chosen by his colleagues (see feature on page 48)



TRACK

6 MENDELSSOHN

Violin Concerto in E minor

Camerata Salzburg / Leonidas Kavakos

Sony

This is the most absorbing new account of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto I've heard for some years. It's an analytical reading in many ways; Kavakos seems almost to hold the work at arm's length and it's all the more affecting for that. There's a sense of delighted surprise about the whole enterprise and much of the same quality pertains to the piano trios. Wonderfully refreshing.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 71**

REISSUE OF THE MONTH



One of the truly fascinating things about Yehudi Menuhin's career is the way in which his art changed over the years. This, as Rob Cowan notes in this month's *Replay* pages, has also been a matter of some controversy, with some insisting that the violinist's technique (as opposed to his interpretative powers) deteriorated during his late period. Here you can decide for yourself across no fewer than 50 CDs. A major retrospective.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 122**



TRACK

7 HANDEL
 Organ concertos
 Academy of Ancient Music / Richard Egarr
 Harmonia Mundi

Gramophone award-winner Richard Egarr takes centre-stage in this sonic spectacular (marvellous sound from Harmonia Mundi's engineers), taking organ and, later, solo harpsichord duties. Yet the Academy of Ancient Music is superbly responsive to its soloist/conductor and together all the musicians find a wealth of colours and moods in the organ concertos.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 68**



TRACK

8 LISZT
 'Liszt Abroad'
 Andrew Kennedy *ten*
 Iain Burnside *pf*
 Signum

Iain Burnside is, it seems fair to say, something of a cult figure among song fans. He can certainly always be relied upon to put together a thought-provoking programme and a high-class combination of singers. His own skills at the piano remain on a par with the finest accompanists (or "collaborative pianists" as Roger Vignoles likes to say). This trip abroad with Liszt is all of those things, a real composer's holiday.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 101**



TRACK

9 WEBER
 Clarinet Concertos, Quintet
 Fabio di Cäsola *cl* Russian Chamber Philharmonic, St Petersburg / Juri Gillo
 Sony

"Like Paganini for the clarinet" is how the young clarinetist Fabio di Cäsola describes these works. He certainly plays them as if with that in mind, all thrilling virtuosity and expressivity. There are actually quite a few excellent and big-name competitors on disc for this repertoire, but di Cäsola more than holds his own. An exhilarating disc.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 75**



TRACK

10 HAYDN
 Die Jahreszeiten
 Wener Gura *ten*
 Genia Kühmeier *sop*
 Concentus Musicus Wien / Nikolaus Harnoncourt
 Deutsche Harmonia Mundi

It's not often, and I'm speaking personally here, that Nikolaus Harnoncourt's interpretations bring to mind the adjective "lovable". Yet here, even more than in his first recording of the work, he imbues Haydn's *Seasons* with such a natural sense of evolution, of a world blossoming and, well, *living*, that it seems apt. His soloists are first-class, especially the thrilling Christian Gerhaher.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 97**



TRACK 11 **MOZART**
Keyboard and violin sonatas Vols 7 & 8
Gary Cooper *fp*
Rachel Podger *vn*
Dabringhaus und Grimm
All good things must, they say, come to an end and this last volume in Gary Cooper and Rachel Podger's complete Mozart keyboard and violin sonatas series concludes one of the most enjoyable multi-volume surveys of recent years. Here the pair sound energised and confident, clearly enjoying the collaboration to the hilt. One must share their enthusiasm.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 79**



TRACK 12 **SAINT-SAËNS**
Piano Quartets
Mozart Piano Quartet
Dabringhaus und Grimm
It seems a cliché to say that Saint-Saëns is still under-appreciated as a brilliant composer as well as a fine tunesmith, as it were. In some ways his reputation is catching up, but not so far in the arena of chamber music. This delightful disc might go some way to correcting that, as the Mozart Piano Quartet bring life-affirming joy to these delightful and yet powerful works.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 83**



TRACK 13 **VÉRONIQUE GENS**
Tragediennes 2
Véronique Gens *sop* Les Talens Lyriques / Christophe Rousset
Virgin Classics
Tragediennes was a great success for Véronique Gens and this, her follow-up, similarly explores a gallery of classical tragic heroines. It is every bit as successful. Gens, lustrous of voice, remains a word-painter of great distinction and there's never any doubting her commitment. The highlight for me is a desperately intense Cassandra in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, not her usual patch but a winner.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 113**



Philip Glass is one of the few classical composers who continues to hold sway in the public imagination beyond avowed classical music fans. People tend to know what you mean when you talk about "a Philip Glass score". This is no doubt largely due to his film work, but the man himself remains an enigma. Shine director Scott Hicks's film gets closer than most to understanding a composer who may be as melancholy as he is brilliant.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 119**



ALSO ON THIS MONTH'S CD

Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* fascinates critic and confirmed Schoenberg aficionado Philip Clark. Discover which recording wins through in his quest to find the perfect version (if such a thing exists).

► **COLLECTION PAGE 56**

Romantic lead turned renowned character actor Alec Baldwin has become a classical music fanatic. Find out which work he couldn't live without.

► **MY MUSIC PAGE 154**

PLUS Enter our Competition. Can you identify the women, the links and the odd man out?



TRACK 14 **SCHNITTKE**
Viola Concerto
David Aaron Carpenter *via* Philharmonia Orch / Christoph Eschenbach
Online
For some, playing the Elgar Cello Concerto in a viola transcription will seem pure chutzpah, for others a continuation of an old tradition. Either way, David Aaron Carpenter proves his credentials as a new viola star with an agile, nuanced reading of the Elgar and a powerful account of the Schnittke. With Eschenbach and the players on fired-up form, this is one heck of a calling-card for the new boy.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 65**

TRACK 15 **VERDI**
Requiem
Orchestra e coro dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome / Antonio Pappano
EMI

As regular readers will know, it hasn't always been the case that new releases that have received a cover story in this magazine have then gone on to win a rave review. That's OK, it's the nature of the beast and the artists themselves always have interesting things to say even if not everyone agrees with their interpretations. But for the second issue on the trot, there has been a happy convergence of cover story and review. To say the least. Our critic Richard Osborne suggests that this is a recording of the Verdi Requiem to put alongside famous sets by Gardiner, Giulini and Toscanini.

I'd mention in the same breath the idiosyncratic brilliance of Sir Georg Solti's 1977 recording, but otherwise entirely agree. The telling thing is, listen at random to any one part of Pappano's reading

'Pappano's Roman forces are awesome to hear. Yet this is his moment.'



and it can seem driven to extremes, but listen to the whole thing and everything seems entirely right. For this is a journey moving inexorably to something at once glorious and frightening.

Pappano's Roman forces are awesome to hear, variously playing and singing at the level of a world-class ensemble. And his soloists are well-matched and properly vulnerable-sounding (even René Pape's questing bass and Rolando Villazón's reined-in tenor, while the women are highly sympathetic). Yet this is above all Pappano's show, Pappano's moment of greatness.

► **REVIEWED ON PAGE 109**

CD of the month

The CLASSIC fm
GRAMOPHONE
Awards 2009

THE AWARDS SHORTLIST

The thousands of recordings that have been released over the past 12 months have been sifted and sorted by our world-class panel of judges and, after deep consideration, they have arrived at a shortlist for this year's Classic FM Gramophone Awards. And what a shortlist it is. Brimming with exceptional recordings across all 15 categories, this year's batch surely ranks as one of the strongest of all. A quick glance at the opera category, for instance, reveals both Anna Netrebko and Angela Gheorgiu in thrilling new recordings and competing, not only with each other, but with a powerful and moving reading of *Owen Wingrave* from Richard Hickox. Vocal recitals? Villazón, Kožená and Quasthoff have all produced great discs this year. Concerto sees Richard Goode do battle, as it were, with Steven Osborne and Giuliano Carmignola. All the awards categories are as hotly contested. But why wait for us to announce the winners? Why not get hold of these recordings yourself and see whether you agree with the final selections when they are announced next issue? The 45 recordings await – disparate, enticing worlds of music.

Baroque Instrumental

Purcell Ten Sonatas in Four Parts *Retrospect Trio*
Linn ⑤ CKD332 (9/09)

Purcell The Complete Fantazias *Fretwork*
Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMU90 7502 (9/09)

'The Rise of the North Italian Violin Concerto'
Vol 3: The Golden Age
La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler (vn)
Avie ⑤ AV2154 (10/08)

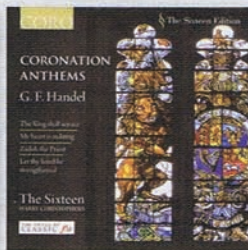
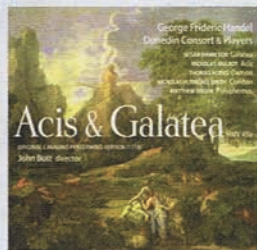


Baroque Vocal

Handel Acis & Galatea (Cannons 1718 version)
Soloists; Dunedin Consort & Players / John Butt
Linn ⑤ ② CKD319 (1/09)

Handel Coronation Anthems, etc *The Sixteen / Harry Christophers* Coro ⑤ COR16066 (4/09)

Lully Psyché *Soloists; Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra & Chorus / Paul O'Dette; Stephen Stubbs*
CPO ⑤ ③ CPO777 367-2 (10/08)

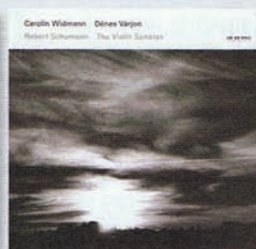


Chamber

Brahms String Quartets – Op 51 No 1; Op 67
Takács Quartet Hyperion ⑤ CDA67552 (12/08)

Debussy, Fauré, Ravel String Quartets
Quatuor Ebène Virgin ⑤ 519045-2 (12/08)

Schumann Violin Sonatas
Carolin Widmann (vn), Dénes Várjon (pf)
ECM New Series ⑤ ② 476 6744 (A/08)

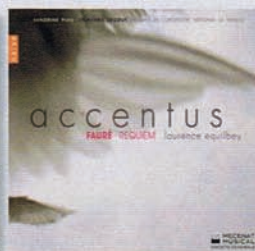
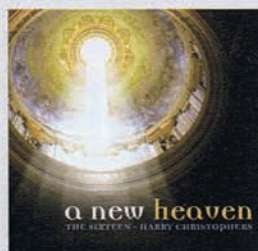


Choral

'A New Heaven' *The Sixteen* / Harry Christophers
UCJ © 179 5732 (5/09)

Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius* Soloists incl
Paul Groves (ten); Choirs; Hallé Orchestra /
Sir Mark Elder Hallé © 2 CDHLD7520 (1/09)

Fauré *Requiem* Sandrine Piau (sop), Stéphane Degout
(bar); Accentus Chamber Choir; French National
Orchestra / Laurence Equilbey Naïve © V5137 (8/09)



Concerto

Beethoven *The Complete Piano Concertos* Richard
Goode (pf); Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer
Nonesuch © 3 7559 79928-3 (2/09)

Britten *Piano Concerto* Steven Osborne (pf); BBC
Scottish SO / Ilan Volkov Hyperion © CDA67625 (10/08)

Mozart *Violin Concertos* Giuliano Carmignola (vn);
Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado
Archiv Produktion © 2 477 7371AH2 (9/08)

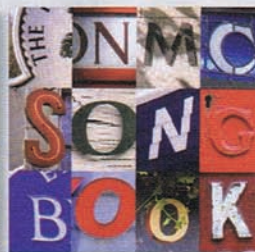
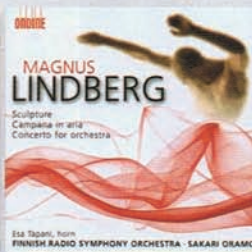
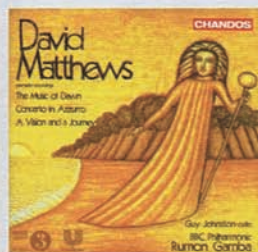


Contemporary

D Matthews *Orchestral Works*
Guy Johnston (vc); BBC Philharmonic / Rumon Gamba
Chandos © CHAN10487 (4/09)

Lindberg *Orchestral Works*
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Sakari Oramo
Ondine © ODE1124-2 (2/09)

NMC Songbook Various artists
NMC © 4 NMCD150 (5/09)

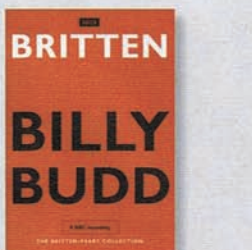


DVD

Birtwistle *The Minotaur* Royal Opera /
Antonio Pappano; directed by Stephen Langridge
Opus Arte © DVD OA1000D (1/09)

Britten *Billy Budd* LSO / Charles Mackerras; directed
by Basil Coleman Decca © DVD 074 3256DH (9/08)

Wagner *Der Ring des Nibelungen*
Royal Danish Opera / Michael Schönwandt
Decca © 7 DVD 074 3264DH7 (4/09)

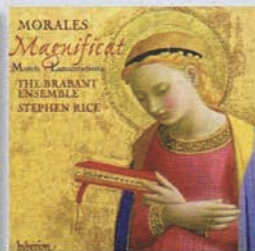


Early Music

Byrd *Hodie Simon Petrus*
The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood
Hyperion © CDA67653 (4/09)

'Song of Songs' *Stile Antico*
Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7489 (8/09)

Morales *Magnificat. Motets. Lamentations*
Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice
Hyperion © CDA67694 (11/08)

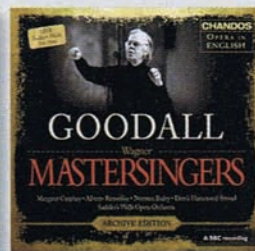


Historic Archive

Berlioz *Les Troyens*
Covent Garden Opera / Rafael Kubelík
Testament © 4 SBT4 1443 (10/09)

R Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier* Bavarian State Opera /
Carlos Kleiber Orfeo d'Or © 3 C581 083D (4/09)

Wagner *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*
Sadler's Wells Opera / Reginald Goodall
Chandos © 4 CHAN3148 (8/08)



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The Times



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Release date: 28th September

Rennée Fleming



Release date: 28th September

Historic Reissue

'The Charming Maverick'

Fritz Kreisler

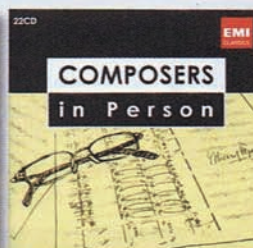
EMI Ⓢ 10 265042-2 (8/09)

'Composers in Person' Various artists

EMI Ⓢ (22 discs) 217575-2 (2/09)

'The Record of Singing, Vols 1-4' Various artists

EMI Ⓢ 10 228956-2 (3/09)



Instrumental

Debussy Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10497 (12/08)

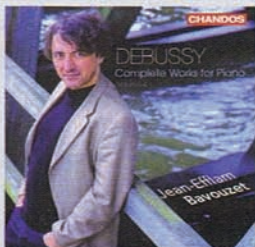
Debussy Piano Works

Nelson Freire

Decca Ⓢ 478 1111DH (4/09)

Rachmaninov Preludes Steven Osborne

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67700 (6/09)



Opera

Bellini *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* Soloists incl Anna Netrebko (sop); Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Fabio Luisi DG Ⓢ 2 477 8031GH2 (3/09)

Britten *Owen Wingrave* Soloists; City of London Sinfonia / Richard Hickox Chandos Ⓢ 2 CHAN10473 (9/08)

Puccini *Madama Butterfly* Soloists incl Angela Gheorghiu (sop); Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano EMI Ⓢ 2 264187-2 (3/09)



Orchestral

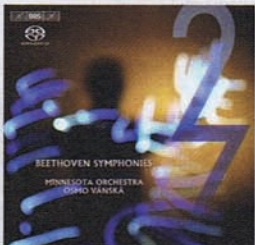
Beethoven Symphonies Nos 2 & 7

Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä

BIS Ⓢ BIS-SACD1816 (1/09)

Mahler *Symphony No 4 Budapest Festival Orchestra* / Iván Fischer Channel Classics Ⓢ CCSSA26109 (4/09)

Tchaikovsky *Manfred Symphony* Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko Naxos Ⓢ 8 570568 (1/09)



Recital

'Cielo e mar' Rolando Villazón (ten); Verdi *Symphony Orchestra* / Daniele Callegari DG Ⓢ 477 7224GH (7/08)

Haydn *Italian Arias* Thomas Quasthoff (bass-bar); Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Gottfried von der Goltz DG Ⓢ 477 7469GH (4/09)

Martinů *Julietta* Fragments Magdalena Kožená (mez); Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras Supraphon Ⓢ SU3994-2 (6/09)



Solo Vocal

Brahms. Schumann Lieder

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (mez); Julius Drake (pf)

Wigmore Hall Live Ⓢ WHLIVE0024 (1/09)

Schumann *Dichterliebe* and other Heine Settings Gerald Finley (bar); Julius Drake (pf)

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67676 (11/08)

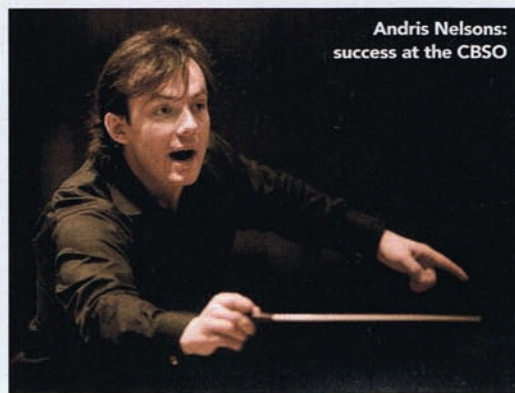
'Songs My Mother Taught Me' Magdalena Kožená (mez); Malcolm Martineau (pf) DG Ⓢ 477 6665GH (A/08)



Soundbites

Music director Nelsons extends CBSO contract

With record ticket sales and critical praise, Andris Nelsons's first season as the City of Birmingham Symphony's music director has been a great success. It therefore comes as small surprise that the 30-year-old Latvian conductor,



Andris Nelsons: success at the CBSO

who was initially hired on a three-year contract, has now extended his tenure until 2014.

CBSO chief executive Stephen Maddock praised the impact Nelsons has had "on the orchestra, on Birmingham audiences and on our recording and touring activities...It's a great tribute to the musicians of the CBSO family and to the dynamism of this great city that such a talented and sought-after conductor has chosen to make Birmingham his musical home".

The 2008-09 season exceeded the orchestra's previously best-selling season by more than four per cent. Nelsons conducted 27 concerts in Birmingham and also appeared at Lucerne, Gstaad, Bonn and Berlin festivals for the first time with the orchestra in August and September. The CBSO recently finished recording Stravinsky's complete ballet *The Firebird* for Orfeo Records under Nelsons. Their first recording for the label – of Tchaikovsky's *Hamlet* and Symphony No 5 – is reviewed on page 73.

New Mozart and Schumann works revealed

July was a month of remarkable discoveries. No fewer than three compositions, which had been languishing for years among foundation collections, were performed for the first time and made available to audiences.

The Research Department of the International Mozarteum Foundation identified two works – a *Molto allegro* concerto movement for harpsichord and a keyboard prelude – as unknown compositions of a young Mozart. The compositions were found at the end of "Nannerl's Music Book", which Leopold Mozart began compiling for his daughter Maria Anna in 1759, and which was also used as an educational tool for the young Wolfgang Amadeus. Written in Leopold's hand, it is thought the works were transcribed by the father as the boy performed them at the keyboard. Both are available

to download, performed by pianist Florian Birsak, at www.mozarteum.at.

Also now accessible online is a seven-page sketch of Robert Schumann's unfinished Fourth Piano Sonata. Tracked down at Stanford University by electrical engineer Dr Paul Green and his pianist nephew Frederick Moyer, the work can be heard in a performance by Moyer and can be viewed in a new computerised version at www.frederickmoyer.com.



The young Mozart and, below, part of the score of a previously unheard (at least by modern ears) work, written in his father's hand



Baltimore Symphony musicians have agreed a 12.5 per cent salary cut, a reduction in pension contributions and a recruitment freeze to combat the recession. The orchestra hopes to save \$1.9m. Single ticket sales in 2008-09 fell by 21 per cent and individual donations by 17 per cent. Music director Marin Alsop has made a \$50,000 donation to the orchestra's fundraising initiative "Music Matters: Play Your Part".



It's all change at the Salzburg Festival. Artistic director **Jürgen Flimm** has negotiated a deal allowing him to quit in 2010, a year ahead of schedule, to run the Berlin Staatsoper. Current music director Markus Hinterhäuser will hold the post of interim artistic director for a year, bridging the gap between Flimm's departure and the arrival in 2012 of new director Alexander Pereira from the Zürich Opera House.

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- 3 (New) Debussy, Ravel** Piano duets
Ashkenazy and Ashkenazy *Decca*
- 4 (New) Haydn** Piano Sonatas Vol 2
Marc-André Hamelin *Hyperion*
- 5 (3) Mozart** Complete Violin Concertos
Kremerata Baltica / Kremer *Nonesuch*
- 6 (Re) 'Fiesta'**
Simón Bolívar Youth Orch / Dudamel *DG*
- 7 (16) MacMillan** Seven Last Words from
the Cross. Dmitri Ensemble / Ross *Decca*
- 8 (13) Bartók** Bluebeard's Castle.
Zhukova, White, LSO / Gergiev *LSO Live*
- 9 (12) Handel** Furore
DiDonato / Rousset *Virgin*
- 10 (Re) Fauré** Piano Quintets
Fine Arts Quartet, Christina Ortiz *Naxos*

» Chart for week ending August 8, 2009 (previous week's position in brackets). For weekly charts, visit www.gramophone.co.uk © The Official Charts Company 2009

GRAMOPHONE talks to...**Véronique GENS**

The soprano revisits a great success with her new album

You've just released a sequel to your *Tragédiennes* disc, again focusing on classical tragic heroines. As with classic Greek tragedy, do these operas require a highly stylised approach?

Not exactly, not in the way that works in plays. But you do need to bring out the characters very vividly. And so it is vital to understand the words intimately. I worked very hard on the words, on how to project their meanings. It's difficult in the arias on this recording because many go much higher than in most Baroque repertoire, so you have to be prepared to let your voice sound less attractive to be understandable. You have to forget the round sounds and the beauty in the centre of your voice. Even if it's painful, even if it's frustrating, you must do that.

This problem is easier for foreign singers in French music, because they know ways to cheat in those very distinct French vowels. Felicity Lott is good at that, she cheats always but it works! Her voice remains full and round and you understand the meaning, but as a French person I don't feel I'm allowed to do that!

Some of the roles here are unknown.

Christophe Rousset, the conductor, likes to find



things that nobody has heard. He went looking in libraries, searching for unknown things by the likes of Piccini and Sacchini. He did a great job of finding wonderful material that fits my voice.

Were there any great revelations?

We went from Gluck right up to Berlioz, and I was so excited to discover what happens with Cassandra's aria in *Les Troyens* when it's played with period instruments. Very few people have tried a period *Troyens*, but I don't know why because it makes the orchestration so much lighter. With those instruments you hear everything, it's no longer a big, never-stopping blockbuster. You can find all the nuances.

So now I would love to sing that role on stage. I never thought I could but my voice is changing and growing, and with a period orchestra I think I should dare to try.

'Tragédiennes 2' is reviewed on page 113

TAKING NOTE**Washington Post**

The National Symphony Orchestra became "the first American orchestra to Twitter programme notes during a concert", while performing Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony. Conductor Emil de Cou "wrote all 30-some tweets himself, drawing on the composer's writings and notes in the score". Unfortunately the varying speeds of Blackberrys, iPhones and other receiving devices meant that those seated in the designated "Tweet-Up" area often missed the relevance of the real-time posts.

www.washingtonpost.com

Philadelphia Inquirer

The lack of African-Americans in US symphony orchestras is not being addressed properly, writes Peter Dobrin. Ensembles such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, who offer excuses that "the talent just isn't out there, and racism can't be the issue because auditions are played behind screens", are "as tone-deaf to race as the Vienna Philharmonic is in its historic exclusion of women". Despite a long-running cultural diversity programme the Philadelphia Orchestra has "the same three African-American members it hired in the 1970s". Still, there are signs of change



– "the orchestra took a quiet baby step" in July by hiring black musician Shea Scruggs as a substitute for its principal oboe.

www.philly.com/inquirer/magazine/

The Times

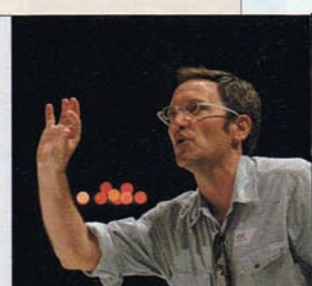
Richard Wagner's great-granddaughters Eva Pasquier-Wagner and Katharina Wagner, who took over the Bayreuth Festival from father Wolfgang this year, "have promised to reveal the Wagner family's link to the Nazis". "If my sister and I don't ask the questions, who will?" said Katharina Wagner. Historians will produce a report in 2013, the composer's 200th anniversary.

entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/

Simon Keenlyside has signed an exclusive contract with Sony Music UK. The British baritone, who was previously signed to an overseas branch of Sony Music, issues Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and a selection of Brahms songs with pianist Malcolm Martineau in September – his first album under the new arrangement. The label has several new releases from the singer planned in the coming months.



Boosey & Hawkes will represent the complete existing catalogue and all future works of composer **Oswaldo Golijov**, following the signing of a new exclusive contract with the publisher. The composer's current commissions include a work to be performed by 35 US orchestras, a violin concerto for Leonidas Kavakos and a stage work for the Metropolitan Opera.



Gallery view {Dudamel, folk hero}

Most of the time, graffiti in the crime-ridden barrios, the slums, of Venezuela is an all-too-familiar symptom of the country's vast underprivileged underbelly. But on this occasion it represented something altogether more hopeful. Gustavo Dudamel, the classical music world's newest superstar, returned to his roots to give a concert marking the 442nd anniversary of the city of Caracas.

Dudamel and his Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra which, as anyone with the slightest interest in classical music

will know, is drawn from the country's enlightened El Sistema music education programme, gave a free street concert at the beginning of August. They chose as their venue, not some tourist trap or presidential showplace, but the humble roads of La Vega, one of the country's more notorious barrios.

To put this into perspective, one Venezuelan blogger who was at the event noted that he would usually not have been able to take photographs for fear of hostile repercussions from some of the residents.

Yet such was the hysteria that greeted Dudamel and his troops that this blogger merrily snapped away and posted the pictures on the web. The concert, with fans crowding into the streets and sitting on the rooftops, was an enormous success.

This evocative picture of Dudamel on a La Vega wall surely conveys better than a thousand words the optimism that the young maestro and his players represent for the millions for whom music can mean more than just a nice tune. It can mean a new way of living; even, crucially, life itself.



The estate of American soprano **Beverly Sills** will be auctioned by Doyle New York, which has previously sold assets belonging to the opera singer Marian Anderson and the jazz legend Louis Armstrong, on October 7. Open to the public from October 2-6 at the auction house, the sale includes fine art, furniture, decorations, photographs and opera memorabilia. For details and a catalogue see www.doylenewyork.com.



The Stanley Sadie Handel Prize has been awarded to **Matthew Halls** and The King's Consort for their world premiere recording of the composer's *Parnasso in festa* for Hyperion. The voting panel was delighted with the advocacy of "this unfairly ignored work". Released in October 2008, the recording features singers Carolyn Sampson, Lucy Crowe, Diane Moore and Peter Harvey.

Thielemann to leave Munich Philharmonic

Following a breakdown in negotiations, Munich City Council will not renew Christian Thielemann's contract as chief conductor of the Munich Philharmonic when it expires in 2011. Thielemann objected to a clause allowing the general director Paul Müller the final decision over guest conductors, soloists and repertoire during the orchestral season. "It can't be that I have, say, over 30 concerts and the intendant over 60. That would negate my position as chief conductor," he told the *Süddeutschen Zeitung* newspaper.

Thielemann was named chief conductor of the orchestra in 2004 after seven years at the helm of the Deutsche Oper, Berlin. In March this year it was announced that he would record all nine of Bruckner's Symphonies with the Philharmonic for television, DVD and new media in an exclusive partnership with Unitel Classica. To date the Fourth and Seventh Symphonies have been issued.



Christian Thielemann:
power struggle in Munich

It ain't over till the fat lady tweets, apparently

Tweeting is to hit Covent Garden. The Royal Opera has invited users of the online messaging community Twitter to use the software to contribute to an opera plot. Twitter allows users to send messages of no more than 140 characters and the resulting "tweets" will be strung together and set to music by the composer Helen Porter. Excerpts will then be performed at the Royal Opera House in early September, as part of the Deloitte Ignite 09 festival. The tweets can be viewed at www.twitter.com/youropera.

It's not Twitter's debut in the opera world, exactly. Last year a classical music blog ran a popular "Tweet an opera plot" contest.

Violinists Jennifer Pike, Agata Szymczewska and Elena Urioste, the three winners of the inaugural London Music Masters, initiate that programme by each giving a one-hour recital in London's Wigmore Hall this month. The programme, created by Royal College of Music violin professor Itzhak Rashkovsky, provides £10,000 to each recipient, specialist mentoring, concerts, recordings and instrument loans.

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

David Aaron CARPENTER

The violist discusses his debut disc, including Elgar for viola

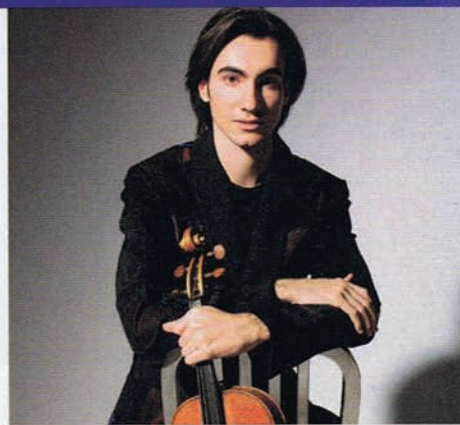
There is, of course, no Elgar viola concerto. You've recorded a transcription of his cello concerto. Are you worried this might be controversial?

I was always taught that confidence comes from research. This idea of transcribing the cello concerto came during Elgar's time from Lionel Tertis who played it for viola, conducted by the composer. And Elgar said that he loved the transcription. That gives we violists a foundation for where we might go.

Transcriptions are only part of the puzzle here. The viola has an amazing amount of repertoire except in that most crucial period of the late 18th and 19th century. We got cheated in a way. Why? Because there were star violinists around? Schumann transcribed his cello concerto for the violinist Joachim. So that puts things in a different light. What does this question of sonority mean? Were composers preoccupied by texture, or structure? It's worth investigating.

Presumably those questions are different for the various composers?

Certainly. Some were very open to hearing their works on a different instrument – Shostakovich said that his Cello Concerto No 1



could be very effective on viola. On the other hand, the piano music of Chopin and Rachmaninov, say, is clearly only designed for the textures of the piano. Just to say, "That might sound cool" isn't enough. And the Elgar has the stamp of approval from the composer!

You've paired the Elgar with Schnittke's Viola Concerto. Are there parallels?

Schnittke was born the year that Elgar died, so there is some sense of a passing of the baton. Both works have things in common. Elgar was dealing with World War One and Schnittke was dealing with the end of the Stalin regime and the increasing threat of nuclear war. So perhaps their preoccupations were in some ways similar. The Schnittke is such a powerful work, a collage of so many ideas and idioms that somehow holds together.

David Aaron Carpenter's recording, for Ondine, is reviewed on page 65

CAUGHT IN THE .NET



The quiz that sends you hunting for musical treasures in Gramophone's archive website – www.gramophone.net – for the chance to win a selection of discs.

As befits such a busy and versatile artist, our cover star Plácido Domingo has appeared regularly in the pages of *Gramophone* over the years and in the October 1978 issue Edward Greenfield dropped in on the RCA recording sessions for Verdi's *Otello* at Walthamstow Town Hall. James Levine was on the podium, the orchestra was the National Philharmonic and joining Domingo behind the microphones were Renata Scotto and Sherrill Milnes. Our question is, according to EG, while waiting for the red light to come on and a proper "take" to commence, what entirely non-tenorial sound did Domingo emit?

Send your answer by e-mail to archivequiz@haymarket.com (please type Oct 2009 in subject line); please include your name, address and contact telephone number. The closing date is October 27.

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The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment continues its Melgaard OAE Young Conductor Scheme with the appointment of 31-year-old Eduardo Portal. He will work directly with OAE principal artists Simon Rattle, Iván Fischer and Vladimir Jurowski, plus guest conductors such as Mark Elder and Roger Norrington, and will "learn from all aspects of the orchestra's life".



MY TOP 10

SEASON SETTINGS

It's 20 years since Nigel Kennedy made Vivaldi's Four Seasons a worldwide hit; but this most famous of season settings is just one of many. **PHILIP CLARK** chooses his favourite seasonal treatments

1 JOHN CAGE SEASONS

Cage's 1947 ballet score "is an attempt to express the traditional Indian view of the seasons as quiescence (Winter), creation (Spring), preservation (Summer) and destruction (Fall)". Think Erik Satie meets *Sonatas and Interludes* as you listen to this fresh, bracing music.



2 DARIUS MILHAUD THE FOUR SEASONS

Spring really hangs you up the most: the *Concertino de printemps* for violin and orchestra came first but, in for a penny, Milhaud completed his seasonal cycle with pocket concertos for viola, two pianos and trombone.

3 ASTOR PIAZZOLLA FOUR SEASONS OF BUENOS AIRES

Not all it seems: originally character pieces written for Piazzolla's own ensemble, composer Leonid Desyatnikov made an arrangement in 1992 for violin and strings with neo-Baroque flourishes designed to evoke Vivaldi. Which is a bit of a cheek.



4 ANTONIO VIVALDI THE FOUR SEASONS (See Gramophones passim)



5 JOACHIM RAFF SYMPHONIES NOS 8-11, 'FOUR SEASONS'

Six years in the making, and unfinished upon his death, Swiss composer Raff lays the picturesque idylls on with a trowel. Ghosts do a round dance (Winter); Summer includes an elfin dance; Romanticism busts out all over.



6 PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY SEASONS

We offer you a covermount CD: *Nouvellist* magazine commissioned Tchaikovsky to write portraits of January-through-December to be published one a month throughout 1876. A Grieg Lyric Piece-like July follows a Mendelssohn-esque June. December is *Nutcracker* cold.

7 CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON THE SEASONS

British composer Christopher Simpson, who died in 1669, was the leading viol-meister of his age. His *Seasons* uses a treble viol, two bass viols and continuo. Tart dissonances colour Winter; Summer is suitably sultry; digging that crazy Baroque Spring energy. A delightful discovery.

8 HENRY HADLEY SYMPHONY NO 2, 'THE FOUR SEASONS'

Championed by Victor Herbert and beloved of John Philip Sousa, Henry Kimball Hadley was a leading American composer of his day. But is it just me, or does his *Four Seasons* Symphony (1899) really sound more like Tchaikovsky than Tchaikovsky's own *Seasons*?

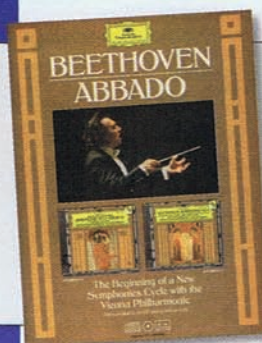
9 ALEXANDER GLAZUNOV THE SEASONS

After Tchaikovsky but before Stravinsky, Glazunov's *The Seasons* was state-of-the-art ballet in 1899. A nice touch in Autumn, where brief recaps of Spring and Summer symbolise the passing year.



10 BORIS ARAPOV THE FOUR SEASONS

A Russian composer who developed a fascination with all things Oriental during the 1930s, his *Four Seasons* (1978) is a song-cycle for soprano, tenor and ensemble that sets Japanese haiku. His Winter is the chilliest around. Wrap up warm now.



CLASSIC ADS Abbado's Beethoven Symphonies, March 1987

Beethoven symphonies, Claudio Abbado, gold embossed Gustav Klimt covers – this was serious stuff from Deutsche Grammophon and with the prospect of the Vienna

Philharmonic purring from your speakers the combination would have been simply irresistible for many. DG were obviously hedging all their bets and at a time when the right combination

of font and style could turn the famous yellow insignia into a work of art in itself, the initial releases in Abbado's first complete cycle ticked all the right boxes. The small print points out that the CDs

were 'also available on LP and cassette' which, in 1987, was an early indication that compact disc had become the medium of choice signalling the beginning of the end for classical records and tapes. ©

A conversation with...

Sandrine Piau: bitten
by the Britten bug

Sandrine Piau

James Inverne is intrigued by the soprano's journey from France to Britten for her new recording

The music of Benjamin Britten and the French soprano Sandrine Piau might not immediately seem like a natural fit. When I meet her, huddled in the corner of a warm café at the Verbier Festival, she seems as surprised as I am at this latest choice of repertoire. She is at Verbier to sing the Fauré Requiem the next night, which seems much more up her street. *Gramophone* readers will have made a beeline for her recent recording of Handel duets with Sara Mingardo. Again, no great leap there.

This is different. The contemporary music label NMC have persuaded her to record Britten's great song-cycle *Les illuminations*, complete with a trio of songs that the composer cut from his final version. "I never thought I'd do this!" she grins mischievously, "Ever since I sang Flora in *The Turn of the Screw* as a child I have adored Britten – that production was the reason I became a singer. But I had a terrible complex with the English language and for years I was sad that I'm not English because I wanted to sing Britten and his language: the colours of the words are so different from French. But this cycle is in French and I thought one day this was something I could do – until, that is, I heard Felicity Lott's recording. At that point I told my record label, Naïve, that I would never record *Les illuminations* because she did it so well and her sung French is much better than mine!"

Yet the Britten bug would never leave her alone. "It was always Britten, alongside Schoenberg and Berg, who was very important in my heart. Perhaps because I started as a harpist and the harp in Britten, often bound up with ideas of children lost, is so fascinatingly used. I only became a Baroque singer when I met the conductor William Christie, but I had no idea about Baroque music before that." So when NMC approached her with news of the "lost" Britten songs, she was, she says with impish glee, "like a cat, so curious!"

For years I was
sad that I'm not
English because
I wanted to
sing Britten

She remains unsure about what the composer himself would have thought of the idea but seems happy to find an excuse. "Is it right or wrong? I don't know, but it was very exciting, and as NMC are seen as an experimental label they seemed like the right people to do this with."

The songs she found "strange, very strange but hypnotic". To work her way into the sound world, she found herself falling back upon, or rather reinventing, old techniques. "The way you approach the sound colour and the balance you

strike are always very important. For instance, when I did the Handel duets album with Sara Mingardo, we approached the sound as something that already existed around us before we even opened our mouths. So when we started a phrase we would cut off the usual "attack" that establishes personality and just tried to join this sound. That enabled us to find an immediate blend, even though our voices have such different qualities."

"So the initial conception is crucial. In Baroque music you usually give a different colour to nearly every word; in German you look to give the general feeling across a phrase. In the Britten it was more interesting to keep the line but also to colour some of the words – if you colour some of the words it gives you a picture, an emotion, something. Yet you must always keep the line, so I was between the two."

This is, I suggest, par for the course in Britten. "Exactly!" The grin again. "Speech is a social language. Music is more primitive, the language of emotion. And with Britten in French you have this very sophisticated language and at the same time this primitive compression of that language. Anyway, it gives me the freedom to impose my own truth." The rain beats down outside the café, and just for a moment it almost seems like Aldeburgh. ☉

■ 'Unknown Britten' is reviewed next month

☉ Visit Gramophone.net/more

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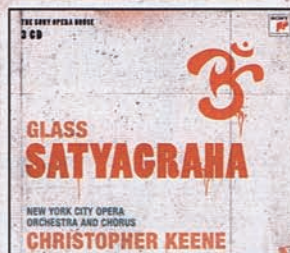
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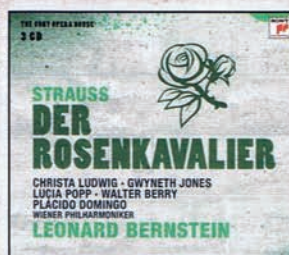
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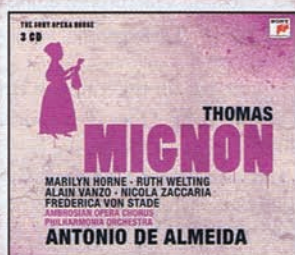
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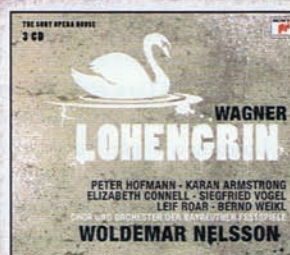
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I've had a rather busy week – not that this is particularly remarkable – but, after recording Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* last week with the lovely Pavlo Besnosiuk on viola and the OAE for Channel Classics, I've been sitting at the computer writing. I don't do this very often as I'm normally playing, teaching, mummying or home-making, so being forced to sit at the computer and actually enjoying it has come as a surprise! There were liner-notes to write for the concerto disc (said Mozart and Haydn violin concertos), a speech for the celebration evening of the local high school – and this page.

I have become quite involved with my local community here in Brecon, Wales. An area of outstanding beauty, it is quite something to look out of the window (as I am now) and gaze at the stunning view of the Brecon Beacons... In fact I spent my birthday this year walking up the highest of them, Pen y fan (read "Pennivan") which stands at 886m – nothing compared to Snowdon, which boasts 1085m, or Cadair Idris outside this area and which I'd still like to tackle, but still steep enough for me.

Together with my partner Tim and our two daughters Carys (eight) and Rebecca (six), I've lived here for five years now. Escaping London was the best move we ever undertook, although we did take in Devon on the way. It is a long way away from the hubbub of musical activity as most musicians I play with of course live in London. Having said that, this is in cultural terms not remote at all and I am more and more amazed how much goes on here in Brecon. There is a "theatr" with an interesting and active programme, which hosts the Brecon Baroque Festival which Tim and I run every October. We include plenty of local talent in the final concert of the four-day event (who all tune their instruments down to 415 pitch)



DIARY

Rachel PODGER

As if recording Mozart wasn't enough of a challenge, the violinist also tackles the Brecon Beacons – for her birthday

as well as students from Cardiff, London and Copenhagen and the whole thing is a ball! There's also a very active cathedral community here with a lovely choir, there's SPYM (South Powys Youth Music), which gives children of all playing standards the opportunity to experience playing in orchestras, and there's a very busy ballet school too. There are many beautiful galleries which promote local talent and plenty of concerts going on. Tim and I set up a concert series in which mainly Gary Cooper, my keyboard duo partner, and I perform (very useful for warm-up concerts for festival dates or any scary concerts in intimidating venues coming up). Any income goes to our "Mozart Music Fund" (set up in 2006), which gives grants to children in South Powys whose families are financially pushed with instrumental lesson costs. It feels good to give something back to the community. A rather lovely side effect of living in a

small place is that you bump into those who you've just played to in the supermarket and get instant personal feedback. That beats any newspaper review any time!

The speech I was invited to give the other night was quite nerve-racking. I'll play any time, but speaking is another matter! I do often introduce pieces to the audience during a concert and have learnt how to be more relaxed doing this by breaking a few codes over the years and speaking (even telling a few jokes!) in places like the Wigmore or QEH. I think it breaks down any barriers that might exist between performers and listeners and the latter home in on the fact that you are alive and kicking all of the time, not just in those two or more hours on the stage.

So I did play some solo Bach to the youngsters and their parents the other night in their school gym, after trying to bring it home to

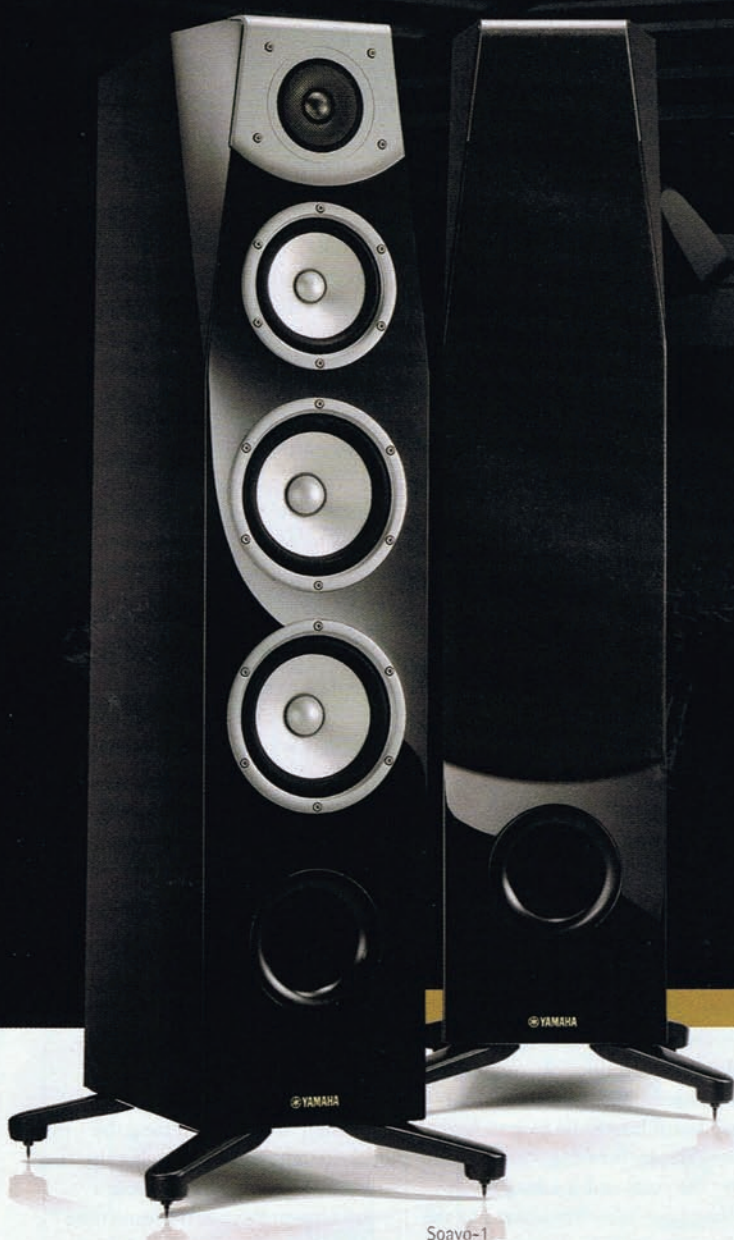
You bump into those who you've just played to in the supermarket

them that it doesn't matter what your particular interest might be, whether it's academic, artistic or sporty; the essential thing is to believe in it, find your voice (excuse the cliché!) and stand up for it. The re-creating process as performers is then brought into the present, communicates to your audience and lives on in their mind as well as yours.

Recording the Mozart last week was a wonderful experience – I adore playing that piece! And it really is so beautifully crafted, isn't it? What's more, Pavlo and I got to play on a Strad each, loaned to us by the Royal Academy of Music (part of their voluminous precious instrument collection). Playing those instruments was not just an honour and an experience in itself, but the one I played, the "Crespi" of 1699, seemed to possess its own personality: some notes resonated and shone like gold, others on the other hand needed a lot of TLC and polish in order to shine. The challenge during the recording for me was getting the balance right between playing the solos and directing the orchestra – listening to them at the same time as playing your heart out feels like a contradiction at times. But a little way into the session I warmed up and got immense pleasure out of striving to an impossible perfect ideal on the horizon. It reminds me of climbing Pen y fan... ☺

Rachel Podger's Mozart and Haydn concertos recording is released in October by Channel Classics
 Visit Gramophone.net/more

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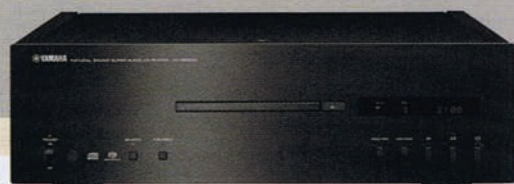
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Lend an ear

Philip
KENNICOTT

Can cross-cultural pollination ever really work in music? How two composers engage with 'Turkishness' in their music...

Critics often operate under the delusion of musical fantasies, looking for ideals that can never exist, dreaming of performances by slender young Salomes or lithe Siegfrieds, or cobbling together impossible dream-team pairings of musicians (Argerich on the piano, Kreisler on the violin) or creators (libretto by Karl Krauss, music by Mahler). Among the fantasies that haunt me, and one that is almost never realised, is the idea of truly intercultural music. I dream of symphonies and opera that achieve the ideal of music as an international, cross-cultural language.

In pursuit of this elusive ideal, I made the discovery, recently, of Dimitrie Cantemir, one of the most fascinating musical figures of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Cantemir was born in what is now part of Romania. He came from a noble family and, in the fine tradition of keep-your-enemies-close diplomacy, young Dimitrie was sent off to Istanbul at the age of 14, an elegant hostage to the Ottoman court. Young Cantemir was well educated in a ridiculous number of languages and he eventually became a prolific author, writing an extensive survey of Turkish music. Ever resourceful, he invented a notation system to fit on the page the dynamic and fluid tradition of music he found in his forcibly adopted home.

Cantemir also wrote his own music in the Turkish style, though his roots were very much in the Western tradition. But a performance of Cantemir's music I heard recently disappointed. It mixed Western instruments (harpsichord, violin) with Turkish staples (kemence, tanbur, percussion). Despite the unlikely and alluring combination of timbres and textures, the

contours of the music were thoroughly Turkish. The presence of the harpsichord and violin added only Western colour, but not compositional substance to the work.

What was I hoping for? Tightly wound fugues based on Turkish themes. Allemandes in the Ottoman style. Something that genuinely mixed musical DNA, rather than a thin veneer of one idiom added to the substantial base of another. It is, no doubt, the result of cultural myopia, but Mozart's *Rondo alla Turca* sounds more genuinely cross-cultural than Cantemir's music. And Mozart, like so many composers dabbling in the "Turkish" sound, is a very tepid and inexact practitioner of musical exotica.

Now for Disappointment No 2. A few weeks after discovering Cantemir, a new disc of piano concertos by Turkish composer Ahmed Adnan Saygun arrived. Saygun (b1907) lived his life against the background of some of the most dramatic events in Turkish history. His father, who taught mathematics, was a dervish and Ahmed was raised in a deeply spiritual and intellectual milieu. He also played the oud and his father's religious background brought the music of the Sufis into his home. Saygun later studied in Paris, where he not only refined his musical technique but studied with scholars who were looking from West to East, examining such mysteries as the Eastern origins of Western chant.

One of Saygun's professors said of his pupil's music: "You can hear in your work the air of your native land." It would be nice to hear the master's tone and see his face when uttering this remark because, taken out of context, it sounds like a classic damning with faint praise. The same teacher exhorted Saygun to remain true to his musical roots, but the piano concertos, composed

in 1951-57 and 1985, are evidence that Saygun didn't heed the command. This is music written under the spell of Ravel and Bartók, big, muscular, busy and colourful music, though not music that will conjure whirling dervishes in your musical imagination.

Of course, if you're constantly disappointed searching for some ideal, it's a good idea to examine that ideal. The Western fantasy of cross-cultural music often carries with it certain colonial overtones: the West gives form, the

'Music that crosses boundaries displaces critics, unsettles our certainty'

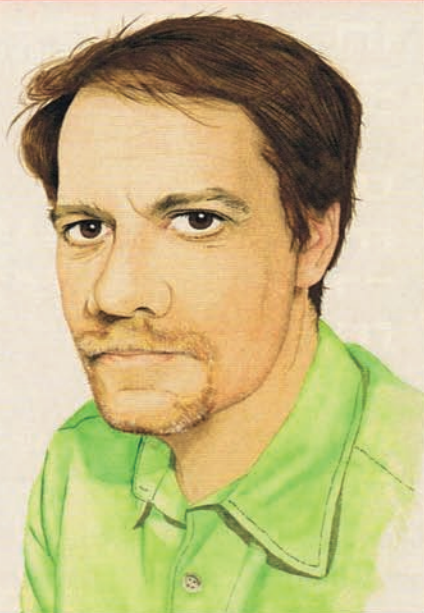
"other" provides raw material. As if composers were smelting some crude, musical ore from benighted lands.

It's possible that the "Turkish" substance in Saygun's piano concertos has nothing to do with the melodic shape or modal content of his themes. Perhaps Saygun asserted his identity by misinterpreting the forms he seems to emulate, that what sounds like disorganised Bartók is in fact a profound mishearing of the master. It's also possible that adding Western instrumental sounds to the long, repetitive melodic lines of Cantemir is a meaningful appropriation of Western music into an Ottoman sensibility.

Possible. But so difficult to hear and appreciate given how lazy and parochial our ears are by nature. This is one reason why critics dread passing judgement on music that crosses boundaries. It displaces us, unsettles our certainty about musical values and leads us down the dead end of impossible fantasies of translation and assimilation. As so many travellers realise, it's not a matter of whether you leave home or not, it's whether leaving home is possible in the first place. ©



Cantemir: a fascinating musical figure



Musical musings

Simon
CALLOW

Creating the role of Mozart in *Amadeus* became a passport to new musical worlds, even if musicians had polarised opinions

So if you have no musical gifts as an executant but care passionately about music, how do you get closer to it? Throughout my childhood, I had the sense of having my nose pressed against the window of music, dazzled and beguiled by the gorgeous delights within, but also frustrated, excluded, not part of it. Singing, the most obvious outlet, was denied to me because I had no confidence in my ability to pitch correctly. My grandmother had had perfect pitch, and found the imperfections in her offspring's attempts at singing so distressing that she banned them from raising their voices in song. My mother's occasional rare and faltering efforts were spontaneously atonal, possibly even dodecaphonic. Vocal *musique concrète*. And she never sang to me. Songs my mother never taught me. Sob.

Moreover, my voice broke very early – I was 10, and the eagle ear of the music teacher instantly identified the jarring sound, barring me on the spot. My friend the novelist Josephine Hart had a similar experience, but rather more brutal. The relevant nun in her convent school went round the girls with a tuning fork, inviting them to match the note. Josephine had a go. "Sit down," said the nun, "and never sing again."

Nothing deterred, I immersed myself in the lives of the composers; I taught myself to follow a score; I studied the *Essays in Musical Analysis* by Donald Francis Tovey. I read *Gramophone*, I went to concerts, I bought records, obsessively. But I still felt an outsider. All this changed when I became an actor: more particularly, when I played the part of Mozart in the original production of *Amadeus*. First of all, I was

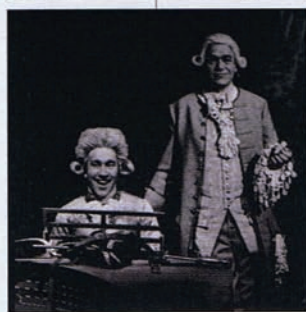
obliged to think very hard about Mozart's music for clues as to who he was. The director, Peter Hall, had given me a superb piece of direction right at the beginning. "However vulgar, childish and petulant the character might be," he said, "I must always believe that he wrote the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*." I took this so to heart that for some while I became the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, hurtling around the building at high speed, gurgling, bubbling, whirling down the corridors like a

dervish. It was very exhausting for Paul Scofield (Salieri), who eyed me with beady apprehension; it was exhausting for everybody. It was exhausting for me. What can it have been like for Mozart, to be possessed day in and day out by that torrent of music?

The second effect of *Amadeus* in my musical life was that every musician in the world, it seemed, was irresistibly drawn to see it.

Once, at an awards ceremony, I saw Plácido Domingo and smiled at him in greeting, forgetting that I had never, in fact, met him. He smiled back politely, then executed a most gratifying treble-take. "Mozart!!" he cried, like Otello's "Esultate!", "Mozart!! I am coming to see you again, and this time I will come to congranulate you!" Alas, he never did, and I remain, to this day, uncongranulated. By contrast, when I was introduced to Colin Davis

'I shan't be coming to see you. If I did, I'd either shout in rage from the stalls or burst into tears'



Callow and Scofield in *Amadeus*, which musicians flocked to see



as the man who was playing Mozart in *Amadeus*, he said, "Nothing personal, but I shan't be coming to see you. If I did, I'd either shout out in rage from the stalls, or I'd burst into tears. I know all that about Mozart. Why drag it up? It's nothing to do with the music."

I met Jane Glover, then assistant to Bernard Haitink at Glyndebourne, at Janet Baker's operatic farewell, *Orfeo*. Jane told me that she was taking over the London Mozart Players and planned a year-long selective survey of the entire works, interleaved with readings from the letters – would I be the reader? And thus I came to work with not just the LMP and their guest soloists, but also, on one glorious occasion, the Amadeus Quartet, who told me that when they had first started out nobody knew how to pronounce their name, just as at the beginning of the run of the play, the box office had been besieged by requests for tickets for Amjus, Amardys and Amadooce.

Since then, with Jane and innumerable other baton-wielders, I've had the immeasurable joy of bringing spoken words to music, a combination that audiences seem to find very pleasing. For me the satisfaction of being, to some extent, within the music has been profoundly rewarding. The next great leap forward for me was after the publication of my first book, *Being an Actor*. Rather surprisingly, considering that the book denounced the supremacy of directors, I received a letter from that fine musician Roderick Brydon, then conductor of the Lucerne Opera, inviting me to direct *Così fan tutte*, one of the most purely blissful experiences of my life. Nearer, my music, to thee. I've since directed a dozen operas around the world.

"What do you call someone who hangs around a lot of musicians?" the old joke used to say. Answer: "A singer." Perhaps a better answer would be: "Simon Callow." ●

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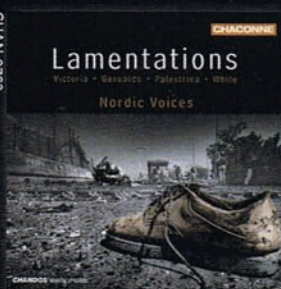
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Portraits of Lincoln

President Barack Obama has triggered renewed interest in music about his great predecessor. Brian Wise has been listening in



The 16th and 44th Presidents of the USA

On a chilly afternoon in January, half a million people gathered at Washington's Lincoln Memorial to celebrate Barack Obama's presidential inauguration with a concert that included Tom Hanks narrating Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*. The symbolism behind the 15-minute orchestral work was unmistakable: both Obama and Abraham Lincoln had arrived in an era of crisis, both had Illinois origins, an improbable rise to power and an uncommon eloquence. Obama hasn't exactly discouraged the analogy either, announcing his candidacy in Springfield, Illinois, and recruiting former opponents to his cabinet (emulating Lincoln's "team of rivals").

Whether motivated by these parallels or not, concert programmers this year have been eagerly marking the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. According to Copland's publisher, Boosey &

Hawkes, there were more than 160 performances of *Lincoln Portrait* between January and April 2009, with 40 more scheduled this summer. In 2008 there were just over 120 performances in total and in 2007 about 75 performances. Although this has long been one of Boosey's most requested scores, the bicentenary has sparked a revival of a work that's usually more admired than loved.

More Lincoln-themed works are on their way. In June the Ravinia Festival, in Lincoln's home state, presented *Proclamation of Hope: A Symphonic Poem*, an evening-length work for wind ensemble, jazz rhythm section and voice by the jazz pianist and composer Ramsey Lewis. In September Ravinia is to present choreographer Bill T Jones's *Fondly do we Hope...Fervently do we Pray*, an ambitious dance piece that will explore Lincoln's life and policies on slavery and the Civil War.

Elsewhere, American composer Michael Daugherty has written *Letters from Lincoln*, a song-cycle that baritone Thomas Hampson unveiled in Spokane, WA, in February and is to be released on a Naxos CD next year. And proving the power of a good title, Anthony Davis – the composer of operas about Malcolm X and the slave ship *Amistad* – has composed *Letters from Lincoln*, a jazz piece that premiered aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* in February.

Just as historians have focused on Lincoln's political acumen (Doris Kerns Goodwin's book *Team of Rivals*), his role as a military commander

(James M McPherson's *Tried by War*) or his conflicted inner life (David Herbert Donald's *Lincoln*), musicians must try to portray America's 16th president without the feeling of a dry history lesson. In *Proclamation of Hope* Lewis sought to humanise Lincoln through a series of musical vignettes. "At first it was exciting," he said of his subject's potential. "Then when it came right down to it and I started reading about the man, I asked myself, 'how do you write music about a politician?'"

So Lewis traced the political legacy that resulted from Lincoln's abolishing slavery – culminating with a black man in the White House – as well as the musical legacy: the lineage of spirituals and blues, jazz and popular music. "I'm comfortable saying pop music would have a different face if not for Lincoln freeing slaves," Lewis added.

Jones also brought a contemporary African-American's perspective, as he explained in a video posted on his website: "The question was how can this work avoid the pitfalls of a Lincoln-Civil War narrative and be instead a free and potent reflection on what that man and that era have to say to me and us now, in 2009." In previews, the theatrical, chamber-size score by New York composer and cellist Chris Lancaster blends snippets of Civil War-era folksongs, quotations of Mendelssohn's oratorio *St Paul* (played at Lincoln's funeral), and texts by Lincoln and Walt Whitman. A socially

Music and choreography: Ramsey Lewis (below left) composed the score for the Bill T Jones Dance Company's celebration of Lincoln





Composer and performer: Michael Daugherty (above) and Thomas Hampson

conscious and provocative choreographer, Jones has spent his career tackling thorny subjects such as social politics, gender, race and religion. Certainly his portrayal of Lincoln may scandalise as many people as it pleases. But exploring a former president through a contemporary lens is nothing new; many Lincoln-themed pieces have come about during a national or global crisis – times when patriotic reminders of past struggles and American ideals have been particularly needed.

The Second World War was one of those periods. Along with Copland's musical essay, one of eight selections gathered on a recent Naxos release, "Abraham Lincoln Portraits", is Morton Gould's 1942 *A Lincoln Legend*. This evocative and skilfully orchestrated symphonic tribute incorporates Civil War folk tunes and spirituals such as "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "The Old Gray Mare". Roy Harris also wrote several Lincoln-themed orchestral and chamber works, notably his fervent and expansive Symphony No 6, *Gettysburg* (1943–44), inspired by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. And George Frederick McKay, a now-neglected composer from Washington state, penned the 1940 work *To a Liberator*, completing the snapshot taken at the zenith of American national pride.

A much darker period in American history surrounded Vincent Persichetti when he composed *A Lincoln Address*. Commissioned in 1973 to write a piece for President Richard M Nixon's second inauguration, the composer set excerpts from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. Yet the choice was vetoed by the Presidential Inaugural Committee because

of Lincoln's comments about the Civil War, which he described as a "mighty scourge". With the US still embroiled in Vietnam, the Nixon folks objected to any text expressing anti-war sentiments. The work's premiere by the Philadelphia Orchestra was cancelled, over orchestra members' protests (eventually the St Louis Symphony got to premiere Persichetti's piece, which had become a cause célèbre, landing front-page stories in the *New York Times*).

The tragic assassination of Lincoln has also found some modern parallels. In 1970, with America still reeling from the deaths of Martin Luther King and Robert F Kennedy, Roger Sessions composed *When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd*, a monumental and stirring cantata dedicated to their memory. The text, by Walt Whitman, was the writer's response to seeing Lincoln's funeral train travel across the country after his assassination.

In 1946 Paul Hindemith set that same poem after the death of President Franklin D Roosevelt, an event that had strong resonances with Lincoln's death. The piece includes a touching march depicting the journey of Lincoln's funeral train.

Charles Ives was never afraid of mixing music with civics lessons, thus such political songs as "An Election" and "The Majority (The Masses)". His 1912 choral work *Lincoln, the Great Commoner*, paid homage to Lincoln during

an era when the US was struggling to find its own artistic voice while also taking a greater role in global politics. Quoting patriotic tunes like "America" and "Hail! Columbia", Ives also used a poem by Edwin Markham praising Lincoln's steadfastness and consistency of vision. If the Persichetti episode mirrored deep uncertainties in the American zeitgeist, Ives used hard-edged chords and tough, determined rhythms to assert a more nationalistic stance.

In recent times, Lincoln's popularity has tapered off among composers. Many tend to avoid obvious flag-waving and perhaps the many heroic and earnest musical tributes to Lincoln have simply exhausted the subject (one exception is Stephen Paulus's 1994 *The Long Shadow of Lincoln*, written in honour of the late Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun). But composer Daugherty believes that one could take a more irreverent and personal approach to the president and still be respectful. *Letters From Lincoln* features strains of bluegrass fiddling to highlight Lincoln's origins in backwoods Kentucky.

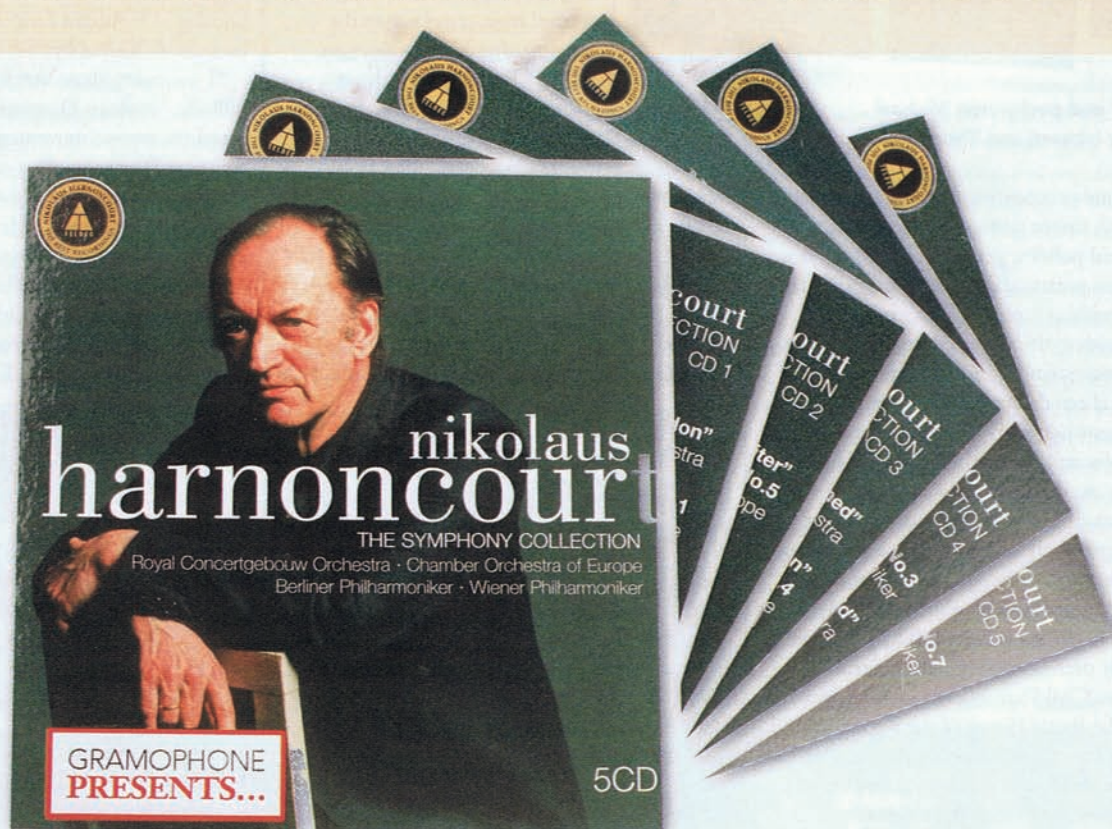
"I wanted to show that he was kind of a hillbilly," explains Daugherty, who previously based the second movement of his piano concerto *Deus ex machina* on Lincoln's funeral train. "I chose texts that show his heroic side but also his vulnerable side. He was often depressed, he had nightmares at times, and he also had a very humorous side, telling stories to sway the crowd." Daugherty added: "Other pieces deal with Lincoln as a heroic icon. I wanted to portray Lincoln as a man." ●



Vincent Persichetti: the Vietnam War led to his work's premiere being (initially) cancelled

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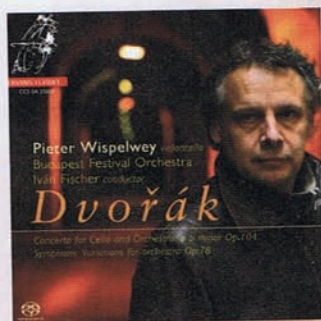
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Alain Lefèvre: a passion for Mathieu



A genius revealed

Pianist **ALAIN LEFÈVRE** on why he has devoted himself to the discovery of a forgotten hero of Canadian music

Three connected moments in my life have changed so much for me and they are all linked to Canadian composer André Mathieu. As a teenager in Montreal my piano teacher was a nun. One day I was walking in the school where she taught and everywhere I could hear this incredibly romantic theme. I found her playing it on the piano. She told me it was a piece by this man Mathieu. She was clearly embarrassed because quite apart from other aspects of his life he was seen as politically incorrect – he was an alcoholic, so for that nun he was almost the devil. But she had this score and it was incredible. I became obsessed with finding out all I could about this composer. The more I discovered, the more I wanted to know. But there was no answer, no score, nobody knew.

One day I did a concert in Montreal and in front of my dressing room found an enormous box – I never saw who left it. And in there I found an incredible wealth of material related to Mathieu. There were manuscripts, letters, documents, scores. Details of meetings with Rachmaninov, with Roosevelt, of concerts in London, a study from Paris in which the geniuses of Mozart and Mathieu had been compared. There was a letter from Rachmaninov saying, "You're the only one who could be my successor". We learnt so much: clearly he had been a big

star! According to the document, in 1943 he was earning something like \$2000 per concert!

Mathieu, I discovered, was a free spirit, a thinker, a man in a clash with his own society. Canadians suddenly just decided that his music was passé, that he was related to the old ways at a time when Stravinsky et al were pushing forward. But it seems to me a scandal to ignore this important historical link to an earlier age.

A few years ago I was giving a concert of his *Quebec Concerto*. A lady came backstage and told me that Mathieu had been the last love of her life. "After André's death people were very mean," she said. "You were the first to play his music again. Only you can have what he gave me." She presented me with a heavy plastic bag. When I opened it I found acetate discs of Mathieu's Piano Concerto No 4. Too drunk to put it on paper, he recorded it six months before he died and gave it to this lady in the bag, but she never had the curiosity to find out what it was! And this piece that I hadn't known existed showed a shocking new side to Mathieu. Here was a modern voice, the composer who had been guided by Honegger. That was all here. I continue to devote myself to discovering everything about this neglected hero. ©

Alain Lefèvre's disc of works by Mathieu is issued on October 12 on Analekta

QUIZ

What am I?

Pit your wits against the Gramophone editorial team

Who? What? When? or Where? Each month we give you a set of clues to help you solve a musical mystery.

- Although many consider me the quintessential French composer of my era, I was actually born in a famous Italian town (pictured below) and only became a French subject in my late twenties.



- I had a close and complex relationship with the French king at that time, which began when we both danced in the same ballet. I worked in his court for over 30 years and composed most of my works for him – it's fortunate that we shared similar musical tastes.

- My musical genius was equalled by my hunger for power: I managed to gain total control

over court music in a relatively short space of time and eventually had a hold over the operas too, so that no production could be staged without my permission.

- I was a notorious libertine and, even though I did marry, my hedonistic behaviour continued to cause a scandal and aggravate the king. However, he could never manage without my entertaining music for too long, so I always managed to get back into his good books.

- Ironically, I died from an injury I received while conducting a performance to celebrate the king's return to health. I left my final opera unfinished but my operatic style shaped the development of French opera for generations to come.

Our mystery French composer's Italian home town



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JULY ISSUE WINNER: The mystery composer was John Dowland. The first correct answer drawn came from Gary Lindner of Hayward, Wisconsin, USA, who wins a selection of CDs.

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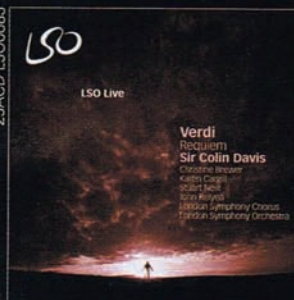
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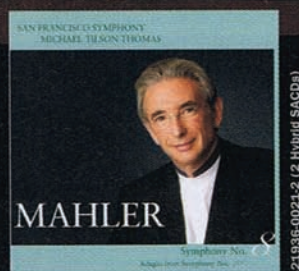
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ONE TO WATCH

Name Jakub Hrůša, 28**Plans** An all-Martinů disc (including the short opera *What Men Live By*) and Smetana's *Má vlast*, both for Supraphon. Leading the Czech Philharmonic's UK tour (October 27-31) as well as many orchestra debuts. Conducting *Don Giovanni* at Glyndebourne in summer 2010.

Jakub Hrůša

That the excellent Czech label Supraphon seems to have anointed Jakub Hrůša as Sir Charles Mackerras's heir apparent in the central Czech repertoire (he has made four recordings for the label already) speaks volumes about a young conductor positively overflowing with talent. That he is poised to take

over both Glyndebourne On Tour and the Prague Philharmonia only confirms the impression of a very major maestro in the making.

Still in his twenties, the Czech-born conductor already has an impressive list of job titles on his CV. Music director of the Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic, associate conductor of the Czech

Philharmonic, young associate conductor of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France – these are all signposts to what looks like being a significant career.

Next up on disc, a Martinů recording and Smetana's *Má vlast*. Music lovers will be watching and listening. *Photographed at Glyndebourne*

Domingo's

Dream Role

Plácido Domingo has been dubbed a "supertenor", yet his true dream is about to be realised – and it's a baritone part. In a rare interview, he takes Harvey Sachs inside his preparation for Simon Boccanegra

Fifty years ago this September, Plácido Domingo made his opera debut in the minor role of Borsa in *Rigoletto* at Mexico's National Opera. He was 18 years old, and no one could have foreseen that the young tenor was embarking upon one of the most astonishing careers in the history of the art form. As this article is being written, the figures are (deep breath): 130 roles; more than 3400 performances on every continent and in virtually every country that possesses a suitable venue (and in several that don't); over 100 recordings of complete operas, compilations of arias and duets and crossover discs; more than 50 music videos; three feature films of operas and a live worldwide television broadcast of *Tosca* from the actual Roman locations where the opera takes place; conductor of more than 450 performances with such ensembles as the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, Chicago Symphony, National Symphony, London Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic and Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal; general director of Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera; founder of the Operalia international singing competition (past winners who are heard today on opera stages around the world include Nina Stemme, José Cura, Rolando Villazón, Simon Alberghini, Elizabeth Futral, Erwin Schrott, Joyce DiDonato, Giuseppe Filianotti, Joseph Calleja, Isabel Bayrakdarian and Joseph Kaiser); founder of young artists programmes in both Washington and Los Angeles; recipient of honours and awards too numerous to list; benefactor to the victims of Mexico's devastating 1985 earthquake and of the floods caused by Hurricane Paulina in Mexico and El Salvador and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans – and much more besides.

Now, at the age of 68, his energy and curiosity apparently undiminished, Domingo is taking on a new challenge: a baritone role – and what a baritone role! Nothing less than the title-part in Verdi's dark and profoundly moving tale of political intrigue and paternal love, *Simon Boccanegra*. Like *Rigoletto*, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *I vespri siciliani* and *Un ballo in maschera*, *Boccanegra* dates from the composer's incredible 1850s – from 1857, to be precise, although it was thoroughly overhauled in 1881. Generally speaking, it is a great favourite among musicians and Verdi connoisseurs, but it is not as overwhelmingly popular as most of the other operas just named because it does not contain one show-stopping aria or ensemble piece after another. No flashy, easy applause-winner for Domingo's baritone adventure. This is a subtly woven drama of nearly Shakespearean complexity, and it requires great conviction on the part of its interpreters and serious concentration on the part of listeners.

As one might surmise from the above short list of accomplishments, Domingo is a hard man to catch up with; some say that the only person in the world of classical music who has a busier schedule is Valery Gergiev. During one six-day period this past summer, for instance, Domingo was seen in China, Italy, Kazakhstan and Germany – in that order. But I managed to spend an hour with him over a late lunch in Verona, where he was conducting a production of *Carmen* to mark the 40th anniversary of his Italian singing debut at the town's famous Arena. The main subject of our conversation was *Boccanegra*, and I wanted to know how he had decided to take on this new challenge.



Advance look: Domingo's costume designs for *Simon Boccanegra*. The staging, produced by Federico Tiezzi and with the costumes designed by Giovanna Buzzi, will be seen in Berlin and Milan

DATES FROM A LIFE

1957 Brought up in Mexico, the Madrid-born Domingo makes his (baritone) stage debut in zarzuela
1961 Debuts as a tenor, in *La traviata* in Mexico, before moving

to become a principal at the Israeli Opera
1965 New York City Opera debut, as Pinkerton, followed by the Met in 1968 (substituting for an ailing Franco Corelli; at

that house he would go on to sing more than 600 performances)
1969 Makes his first solo recital record, for RCA, conducted by Edward Downes. He has since made more

than 100 recordings, eight of which have sold more than a million copies.
1973 Makes his conducting debut with *La traviata* at New York City Opera

1975 Defying those who say he is too light for the part, Domingo sings his first Otello, in Hamburg. It would become his most famous role.
1990 Debuts as one of

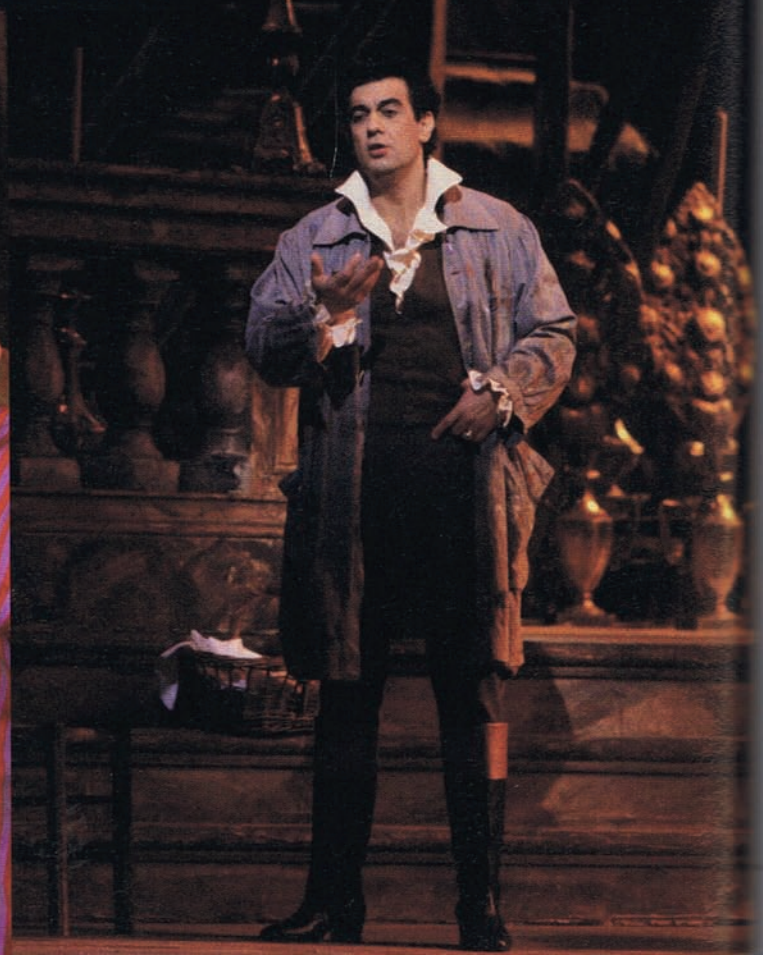
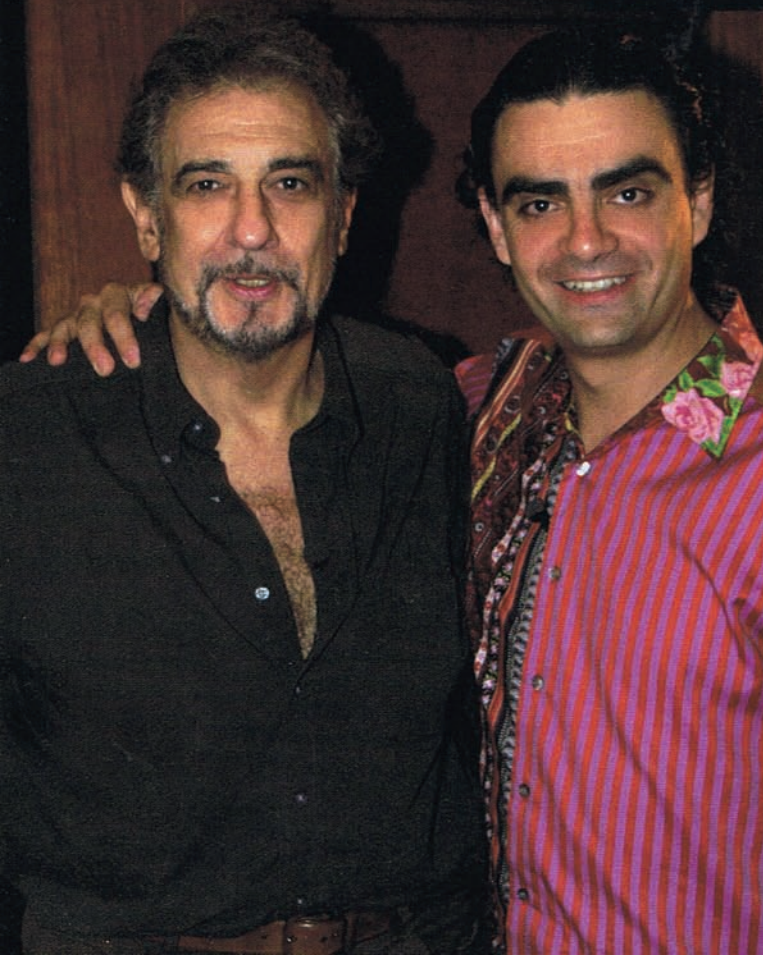
the hugely popular Three Tenors act at the Football World Cup
1996 Becomes general director of Washington National Opera, and of Los Angeles Opera in 2001.

Artistic impression:
artist Bruce Emmett
researched the history
of the Doge for this
painting of Domingo
as Verdi's *Boccanegra*





Some of Domingo's noted roles; as (clockwise) Alfano's Cyrano, as Siegmund in Wagner's Die Walküre, as Puccini's Cavaradossi and, offstage, as mentor to young talent (here Rolando Villazón)



CHANGING VOICES

Domingo isn't the first high-profile singer to switch vocal categories. While still quite rare, there have been other examples.

Ramón Vinay

The most famous Chilean tenor was billed as "the great Mexican baritone" when he first appeared on Mexican radio. He forged a bright career singing baritone roles so it must have been a shock to his fans when he suddenly sang Verdi's *Otello* in 1944.

He recorded that role for Toscanini and enjoyed a second career as one of the world's most celebrated tenors. Eventually he returned to baritone (even some bass) roles. His lagoon is preserved on unofficial recordings, and in his farewell to opera, an *Otello* in Mexico, he alternated the two lead roles.

Carlo Bergonzi

Bergonzi, that most elegant and eloquent of Italian

opera stylists, started life as a baritone before making his move tenor-wards. So his professional debut was as Rossini's Figaro in 1948, and it was only three years later that he re-emerged, as Giordano's Andrea Chénier.

Rosalind Plowright

Once billed as the great British Verdi soprano, Plowright's creamy instrument started to show signs of wear after a couple of successful recordings.

A projected *La Traviata* with Giulini never happened, and a couple of stage comebacks never quite did the trick. In recent years Plowright has returned as a character mezzo of formidable presence.

Grace Bumbry

Although she always had a fairly lacerating (in a good way) higher register, it was still a surprise to some when one of the most celebrated mezzos

of her generation turned up as Strauss's *Salome* at Covent Garden in 1970. That heralded a procession of soprano roles – *Aida*, *Tosca*, *Jenůfa*, *Norma* and even *Turandot* were among those that followed. One memorable occasion at the Opéra Bastille, with Shirley Verrett having withdrawn as Berlioz's *Dido* in *Les Troyens*, Bumbry sang both major female leads (she was already engaged to sing *Cassandra*) in one night.

Domingo chuckled. "My dream was to do *Boccanegra* at the tail end of my career, when I was nearly ready to stop singing and would no longer be able to do tenor repertoire. I don't pretend to be a baritone, but I thought I would finish with this role – I love it, and I will do it. But what happened is that I accepted to do a bunch of *Boccanegras* during the 2009-10 season – in Berlin and at La Scala, at the Met, in Madrid and at Covent Garden – 27 performances in all. Now I wish that I had scheduled them two or three years later, because the fact is that I'm still singing tenor roles between and after the *Boccanegras*, in Handel's *Tamerlano*, Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* and in *Il Postino* – the opera we have commissioned from Daniel Cattan for Los Angeles next year – and I hope that singing a baritone part so many times won't get in the way of my singing as a tenor. But I accepted, the opera houses made the commitment and that's that. Of course I'm very enthusiastic about doing *Simon*."

Domingo did sing baritone roles in Mexico when he was in his teens, before he became a tenor. And much later, when he was about 40, he was asked by Herbert von Karajan to sing another great baritone role: Don Giovanni. At the time, he said that although he had the range to cover the role, notes that sound high and brilliant for a baritone don't sound high and brilliant when they are sung by a tenor. Domingo hastens to clear these matters up.

"I never sang baritone parts in operas – only in zarzuelas [Spanish operettas], and the baritone tessitura in zarzuelas is higher than in operas. It is more or less in the Heldentenor range. And I was so, so very sorry about that Don Giovanni incident with Karajan. Here is what happened: I was interviewed during an intermission in the Met's first live broadcast to Europe – a performance of *Manon Lescaut*. During the interview I said that I would like to sing the role of Don Giovanni someday. Little did I know that 24 hours later Karajan would ask me to sing it with him at Salzburg. I turned him down. I said that it was something that I was thinking about doing 25 years later, but not then. He was quite upset. So my comment in that interview didn't help very much – it spoiled a bit my relationship with Karajan for a few years."

Naturally, one can't help wondering whether Domingo is interested in singing the great Mozart role now. It is hard to imagine anyone who could communicate it more convincingly.

"To tell you the truth, although *Don Giovanni* is one of the greatest operas ever written, I'm not very keen on singing that part. I find the character of Don Giovanni very *antipático* – not because he has all those women but because he is so cruel. He treats Leporello so badly, he laughs without pity at Donna Elvira. And there is so little charm. Don Giovanni should be the man every woman hates but secretly would like to be in bed with. I don't say that I'll never do it – maybe someday in concert form, in a very interesting way – but it is not a dream of mine, as doing *Simon*

[*Boccanegra*] was always a dream. The character develops and changes so much in the course of the opera."

This psychological complexity, which would frighten many singers, is precisely what most attracts the man whom many observers think of as the greatest *Otello*, Don Carlo, Parsifal, Siegmund, Hoffmann, Don José, Hermann (the list goes on and on) of our day. He shared some of his thoughts about this new role:

"I always considered that in the Prologue *Simon* is a sort of 'tenor' – a lighter 'voice' – a young man who is manipulated by others for political reasons, who wants only to be with his beloved Maria but then discovers that she is dead. It's a breaking-point for him, a crazy thing – he cannot even react when everyone rushes in to proclaim him Doge of Genoa. He is like a marionette. The drama of the situation is fantastic."

This writer recalls the nightmarish effect that Giorgio Strehler created at that point in his *Boccanegra* production at La Scala in the 1970s. Strehler understood that the Prologue unfolds at an almost conversational pace until the shocking moment at which *Simon* finds the dead body of his beloved, and from there until the end of the scene – when the joyous crowds shout "Viva *Simon*" while *Simon* wishes only to die – everything happens in sped-up time. It is one of Verdi's most brilliant strokes. Strehler had the exultant mob lift the distraught *Simon* and parade him about, but *Simon* looked like the Christ figure in a painting of the Deposition from the Cross.

"And then," Domingo continues, "the rest of the opera takes place 25 years later! Now *Simon* is the mature man, the 'baritone', who has been in power and has known the exasperation of power, but who has always been looking for his daughter. Then finally the daughter is so close, but he has a rival in a young man – the daughter is in love with Gabriele Adorno, and *Simon* has been the cause of his

father's death. It is a tremendous problem, and it becomes even bigger because of the involvement of Fiesco, who is the girl's grandfather and who is also seeking vengeance against *Simon*. Fiesco thinks that the girl is dead until almost the last moment in this tremendous drama, when he has to tell *Simon* that he has been poisoned. Then there is the father-daughter relationship – it's a little like *King Lear*, and in fact we can almost think of it as the *Lear* opera that Verdi wanted to write but never wrote."

The transition from *Simon* the young adventurer of the Prologue to *Simon* the mature man of power has to take place within an almost impossibly brief time-span, and changing from a dark wig to a grey one is wholly insufficient to convey the internal character change. Great flexibility of vocal colour is required.

"That is the most important thing!" Domingo concurs. "Through my whole career, whether I am singing a very lyrical or a very dramatic role, or a role like *Otello*, which combines lyrical and dramatic qualities, the most

Domingo on stage

Tickets for the tenor's various Boccanegras around the world are certain to sell out early, so it's as well to be warned as early as possible. At the time of going to press, the following dates and venues are confirmed.

Deutsche Oper, Berlin

Oct 18 - Nov 13 and Mar 27, 30

Metropolitan Opera House,

New York Jan 18 - Feb 6

La Scala, Milan April 16 - May 7

Royal Opera House,

Covent Garden Jun 29 - July 15

Teatro Real, Madrid July 22-28

important thing, vocally, is the colouring. I always say that a singer is like a painter: you have the palette and you can make all kinds of colour combinations. Sometimes, even when I was very young, I was colouring my voice according to which instrument was accompanying me, if the instrument was there for a reason – to express pain or joy or mockery or extreme happiness. After support and projection, which of course an opera singer has to have, colour is the third essential part. You must never be monochromatic as an interpreter – it leads to monotony. The voice has to have the flexibility to reflect all the dramatic situations.”

Domingo has been profoundly familiar with this opera for many years, and indeed he has sung its main tenor role, Gabriele Adorno, not only in the revised 1881 version of the opera, which is the one most often heard, but also in the original 1857 version, which he performed at Covent Garden.

“The only thing I really miss from the earlier version is the Fiesco-Gabriele duet in the first act,” he says. “In the later version, it becomes a kind of religious piece, but in the earlier version there was a vendetta duet against Simon: Fiesco wants revenge for his daughter and Gabriele for his father. It is very powerful and effective, and it happens at the perfect place, just before the scene where Simon and Amelia realise that they are father and daughter. So I have a little dream to use the original duet in one of the productions of the later version that I’m doing; with a bit of modulating in the previous recitative it could work, and it would make the plot to get rid of Simon clearer. I also think that Amelia’s original aria at the beginning of Act 1 is a lot more interesting than the later one, but it is even more difficult than the one in the later version – which is difficult enough!”

The Berlin Staatsoper and La Scala are sharing a new production of *Boccanegra* staged by Federico Tiezzi and conducted by Daniel Barenboim. All the other productions of the opera in which Domingo will appear this season already exist: those at the Met (with James Levine on the podium) and Madrid (Jesús López-Cobos) are both by Giancarlo Del Monaco, although they are not identical; Covent Garden’s production is by Elijah Moshinsky and will be conducted by Antonio Pappano. Domingo’s co-stars in the various productions will include – among others – Adrienne Pieczonka, Marina Poplavskaya and Anja Harteros as Amelia Grimaldi; Marcello Giordani, Joseph Calleja and Fabio Sartori as Gabriele Adorno; and James Morris, Ferruccio Furlanetto and Kwangchul Youn as Jacopo Fiesco.

I can’t refrain from asking Domingo the inevitable question: do you intend to do other baritone roles after *Boccanegra*? “I have no intention of making a new career as a baritone,” he replies. “I won’t say that I haven’t been asked to do a couple of roles, and I am especially considering Athanaël in *Thaïs*, because the 100th anniversary of Massenet’s death is coming up in 2012, and since he is a composer I have been quite involved with, I might do it. One or two other projects have also been mentioned, but I’m not looking to enlarge my career by doing 10 or 20 baritone roles.”

Many British opera lovers and Domingo fans were disappointed that the Madrid-born tenor did not appear at Covent Garden last season, but this

season he is returning not only with *Boccanegra* but also with Handel’s *Tamerlano*, which he sang a couple of years ago in Madrid and Washington to great acclaim.

“Because of scheduling problems, I couldn’t sing at Covent Garden last year, which is why I’m doing two operas there this season,” he says. “*Tamerlano* was a very happy discovery for me. I have always loved the Baroque repertoire – I even sang Rameau’s *Hippolyte et Aricie* early in my career – and the dramatic quality of the role of Bajazet in *Tamerlano* is unbelievable. At my age, I have to be selective in my roles: I can be a pope or a cardinal, the aging Pablo Neruda in *Il Postino*, or the protagonist in Alfano’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, or maybe an ageless, mystical character like Athanaël, who is a kind of a Samson. But one of the things that most fascinates me at this stage in my career and in my life is the father figure in opera. *Boccanegra* is a suffering father searching for his daughter; Bajazet is a suffering father who is trying to defend his daughter. I sang the world premiere of Tan Dun’s opera *The First Emperor* at the Met in 2006–07, and that protagonist also has a difficult relationship with a difficult daughter. These roles make me reflect on my life as a father, even though I have three sons and no daughters, so it’s something new for me! In any case, *Tamerlano* is extremely interesting, and of course vocally, with six or seven arias and big, big recitatives and such a dramatic ending, it is an enormous challenge. The Covent Garden production is the same one that I did in Madrid, and I will also be singing the role in Los Angeles this season, in the production that we did in Washington.”

Thirty-five years ago, when Domingo first decided to take on the role of Otello, various singing experts – real and self-proclaimed – predicted that it would destroy his voice. But the fact is that he has always been the best judge of his capacities and has never taken undue risks. In the early 1980s, when I was working with him on his memoir, *My First Forty Years*, he said: “I certainly do not want to be one of those singers of whom people say, ‘My God, he’s still singing! Has he no self-respect?’ I can imagine myself 15 years from now doing musical comedy – Professor Higgins in a Spanish version of *My Fair Lady*, which I love, or other roles in other classics of the genre.” But more than a quarter of a century later he is still going from strength to strength in opera. His repertoire has changed over the years as his voice has darkened, but the beauty, power, purity of intonation and clarity of enunciation are all remarkably intact, as are his persuasive acting abilities and extraordinary overall communicative capacity.

Plácido Domingo may have thought that his career as a tenor would be over by now but there are hundreds of thousands of opera lovers in the world who would be happy to see it go on forever. I ask him how long he plans to continue, and his answer demonstrates both his artistic seriousness and his desire to give everything he has in himself to give:

“I have been saying to myself for some time, ‘Not a day more than I should, but not a day less than I can.’”

BOCCANEGRA ON DISC – FIVE GREAT RECORDINGS



Cappuccilli, Freni, Carreras, Ghiuriov; Orch of La Scala, Milan / Claudio Abbado (DG 449 752-2G0R2)

This is in many ways the classic set, thanks to good sound, a cast without a weak link (Mirella Freni outstanding as Amelia) and above all Abbado’s propulsive, evocative conducting.



Gobbi, De los Angeles, Campora, Christoff; Rome Opera Orch / Gabriele Santini (EMI 763513-2)

If *Boccanegra* is all about Boccanegra, then Tito Gobbi it has to be. He presents a character of complexity and nuance. And in the mighty Boris Christoff he had a Fiesco to go toe-to-toe with.



Gobbi, Gencer, Zampieri, Tozzi; VPO / Gavazzeni (Gala GL100508)

This is live and “unofficial” so the sound is for connoisseurs, but Gobbi surpasses his studio effort here, giving a masterclass in vocal acting. With a cast as good or better than the EMI rivals, this is the best *Boccanegra* on disc.



Agache, Te Kanawa, Sylvester, Scandiuzzi; Orch of the Royal Opera House / Sir Georg Solti (Decca 222 071 4239DH)

Elijah Moshinsky’s Covent Garden staging is elegant rather than thought-provoking but Alexandru Agache here is a Simon in the Gobbi line, complete with Italianate bite to the tone.

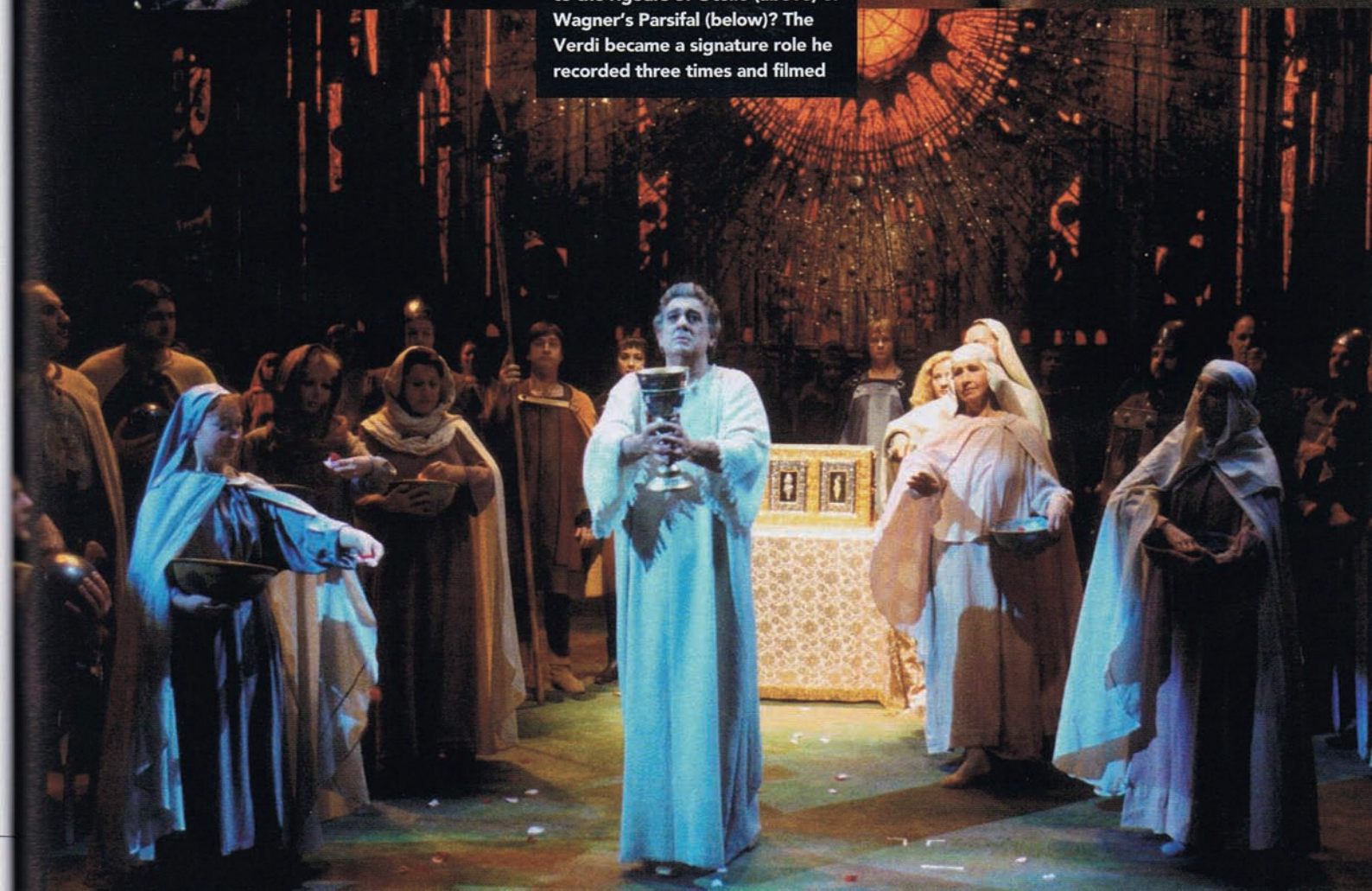


Guelfi, Mattila, La Scola, Konstantinov; Florence Maggio Musicale Orch / Claudio Abbado (TDK 222 DV-OPSIBO)

Decades after his famous audio recording, Abbado returned to the opera with a less charismatic (Mattila aside) but fine cast. Peter Stein’s production, though, is brilliant, as is Abbado.



Two roles that tempted the fates: would Domingo's tenor stand up to the rigours of Otello (above) or Wagner's Parsifal (below)? The Verdi became a signature role he recorded three times and filmed



Domingo as Otello with
Kallen Esperian as his
Desdemona in Paris, 1990.
His final audio recording
of the role, in 1994, was
hailed as a great
re-imagining



Domingo and us

The last 15 years

A decade and a half ago, **John Steane** wrote an authoritative survey of Plácido Domingo's recorded legacy. All these years later, with the tenor showing no signs of slowing down, it's time for the sequel

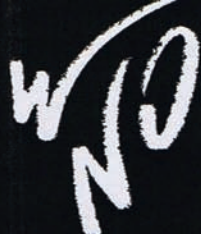
When Domingo's first recordings were issued in this country many years ago, *Gramophone* welcomed his arrival but in terms which were certainly not going to turn any young tenor's head. It had been the same a little earlier with Pavarotti. The young Pavarotti, though "unsubtle", was definitely "not a brute". Praise indeed. Avoiding "any extravagant paeans", Domingo's reviewer went so far as to suggest that he was "among the best", adding by way of moderation "as tenors go today". Very few tenors, we reflect now, whether of today or yesteryear, have "gone" as far as Domingo in terms of vocal longevity, breadth of repertoire and (humdrum virtue maybe but not the least valuable) general musical usefulness. The relative quality of their various arts is of course more a matter of personal opinion.

It was partly as an anthology of such opinions that an article was published in *Gramophone* (6/94) with the same main title as this. "Domingo and Us" (1994) traced Domingo's career on records by following his reception in these columns over a period of 25 years. Ten critics were quoted (the reviewing panel being much smaller in those days) and, though objections of "Gramophone orthodoxy" may arise, when I think of these writers individually I see none of them mildly swallowing anyone else's opinions. It is a fair critical cross-section. Looking back over the report now, one can't perhaps help wishing that the first reviewer had "gone off into paeans" if that was his inclination (as long as the praise had been critically substantiated which, this reviewer being Andrew Porter, it would have been), but he was right to be cautious. As it was, both Domingo and Pavarotti were taken as signals that "the art of

the Italian tenor, which had lately seemed to be in the doldrums, is looking up".

This, after all, was also the age of Bergonzi, Gedda and Kraus (Corelli still active for some years). Soon Carreras was to come along as a "third" tenor. Bonisoli, Cossutta and Fernandi were among their contemporaries, with Alagna, Araiza, Sabbatini, Vargas and others coming into view a little later (and that is to confine the list to "Italians"). It was by no means, in spite of frequent moanings, an age starved of tenors, but Domingo and Pavarotti ruled in the public estimate as they did in the record lists. Of the two, the danger for Domingo was that he would be seen as spreading himself too widely and too thin. The survey did show reports along these lines, yet always at moments when it might seem that routine and mere reliability were taking over, along would come some new venture – the *Otello*, the Wagner, the completely unlooked-for *Frau ohne Schatten* – to quicken a new appreciation. And each new phase brought fine tunings of the voice itself, an instrument which was carefully tended, never abused.

The earlier article left off with the new issue reviewed in the month of publication: the Metropolitan Opera-based *Il trovatore* under James Levine. *Gramophone's* reviewer, the late Alan Blyth, devoted a paragraph to Domingo's Manrico. It was, he found, not quite at ease in the more stressful moments but was rich in artistry, with the singer at his best in the Prison scene, the "sovereign phrasing" of "Riposa, o madre" an unforgettable feature. In the survey-article the recording was seen as "bringing the wheel full circle", for *Il trovatore* had been Domingo's first recorded opera, issued a quarter of a century earlier. If it had been a challenge to the young tenor then, it was now one of a different kind to the

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ENGLAND

FIVE GREAT DOMINGO RECORDINGS

From the many dozens of Domingo's recordings, **James Inverne** chooses five that demand to be heard.



Les contes d'Hoffmann
Suisse Romande Orch /
Richard Bonyngue
(Decca 417 363-2DH2)

The tenor's natural ardour has a credulous edge here, as Hoffmann's passion is played upon by his enemies. Beautifully sung, splendidly acted.



Carmen
Royal Opera House Orch /
Sir Georg Solti
(Decca 414 489-2DH3)

Domingo is one of the reasons why this is still the finest *Carmen* in a competitive field. His Don José moves organically and believably from slightly shy soldier to crazed obsessive.



La fanciulla del West
Royal Opera House Orch /
Zubin Mehta
(DG 474 840-2GOR2)

This recording, revelatory at the time, finds Domingo at the peak of his first golden period, voice shining, in a set that had much to do with establishing this opera's popularity.



Otello
Opéra Bastille Orch /
Myung-Whun Chung
(DG 439 805-2GH2)

His third studio *Otello* is his most complete. You can hear the Moor audibly disintegrate. By the close he is little more than a wrecked shell. The role still awaits his heir.



Tristan und Isolde
Royal Opera House Orch /
Antonio Pappano
(EMI 558006-2)

Brushing persistent criticisms of his German pronunciation aside, Domingo ascended the Wagnerian Everest with this magnificent recording. His Tristan is noble, even in his agony.

man in his fifties. The great achievement had been to meet both challenges with such noble success.

Since then the circle has expanded. New releases have become less frequent but still significant, and the critical tone has deepened in acknowledgement of a lifetime's achievement. Not surprisingly, a fair proportion of the "new" issues have in fact been reissues. Michael Oliver, for instance, found Domingo's "riveting" performance in the 1972 *Tosca* (3/93) survived best of all, and Richard Fairman (11/00) found him "at his golden best" in the by-now classic *Don Carlo* under Giulini. That remained my own favourite Italian version of the opera when it came under review for the *Gramophone* Collection series (1/07).

As the number of new opera sets on CD has diminished, the supply of DVDs has increased. Most recent (8/08) has been the *Otello* from Covent Garden under Solti, confirming just how fine an actor he became, and again I found it "deeply impressive, and moving, to see how completely Domingo lives his part". The previous month had brought a *Pagliacci* from Vienna, 1986, and Mike Ashman commented on the stylishness, "no huge sobs put on with that motley". Another *Otello*, this one from Vienna (10/07), *Stiffelio* (9/07) and *Don Carlo* (3/06) from the Met, and *Un ballo in maschera* from Salzburg (2/06) have been among other admired recent DVD issues. But this now constitutes a rich source of material fit for a survey on its own.

Of the new opera recordings on CD, several have been of roles recorded in earlier versions, affording evidence of Domingo's growth as an artist.

With this has usually come some appreciation of his enduring vocal quality, as in Verdi's *Requiem* from Chicago under Barenboim (11/94) where Alan Blyth thought him "at his very best, pouring out golden tone as of old on a long stream of breath, the final line of the 'Ingemisco' taken on a single breath up to a ringing top B flat and the 'Hostias' sung in a honeyed *mezza voce*". A major issue was announced under the punning title "One Moor for DG" (12/94) when the recording sessions of a new *Otello* were the subject of a report by Nicholas Soames who observed how after the scene with Desdemona in Act 3 Domingo sat down, lowered the mike, leant forward and, using "a totally different sound, one of utter despair", began singing the great monologue. Richard Osborne, reviewing in the same number, remarked it was "as though Domingo has rethought the role for the microphone, much as a great actor might adapt his *Othello* for the radio".

In these years the magazine ran, as a regular feature, a "Quarterly Retrospect" in which all major issues might be given the benefit of a second opinion. The vocal Quarterly was my responsibility and I found it possible on some occasions to go into more detail than could be accommodated (or than would have been proportionate) in the first review. While fully sharing the general admiration for Domingo's *Otello*, I did feel a lack of one element, the bitterness of personal resentment working "like the mines of sulphur" as in the burning irony of "Dio ti giocondi" in Act 3. I pointed to the final denunciation "Anima mia" as needing more declamatory freedom from the strict confines of the written notes. Similarly in the opening of the monologue Domingo "seems to be loath to leave the singing-note and the singing-tone even when Verdi's score seems to want him to ('voce soffocata')".

More controversial was Domingo's Wagner. He had included a solo from *Lohengrin* in his debut recital, prompting Desmond Shawe-Taylor (7/69) to speculate that one day he "might become a valuable Wagnerian tenor" (note: no caveat about needing to improve his pronunciation of German). Then, in 1976, came what Alan Blyth described as "the great and unexpected revelation" of his Walther in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The drawback was his German, and that continued to be found so in the *Lohengrin* (10/87) and *Tannhäuser* (9/89). It worried me less than most critics. For one thing, I found ample compensation in the voice, especially when that was supported by such evidently thorough preparation. For another, I rather suspected a fad and felt that such

grumbles came best from native speakers of the language. The debate still dogged the *Parsifal* (AB's review 11/94, my Retrospect 1/95) and the *Walküre* Act 1. AB even intensified the severity of his complaint: "He still sings German as if he had learnt it by rote" (3/99). He cited various German tenors in the part, saying that their more idiomatic and natural enunciation enabled more expressive and better phrased performances. The Quarterly, still doubtful, queried this, using the "Friedmund" solo as a test-piece. I found that Domingo's equalisation of syllables in the verbs "heissen" and "nennen" placed undue emphasis on

the terminations, and that he didn't make much of the poetic and expressive force of an alliterative "w". "Yet, throughout the solo, he is responsive to textual meaning (as, for instance, in the bitterness of 'muss ich mich nennen')". He had also caught (the account continues) "the inspiration, verbal as well as musical, of the Act 1 Finale, 'Heiligster Minne höchste Not' and the last phrases of all... Surely something better than rote-learning here".

A taste of the Tristan yet to come was afforded in a recording with Deborah Voigt of the authorised concert version of the Love duet, coupled with the "awakening" scene in *Siegfried*. The first review was allotted to me and paid tribute to the expressiveness and vocal quality (9/00). Alan Blyth, reviewing scenes from *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* (6/02), noting Domingo's age as "in his sixties", was impressed by the ease and vigour of his Forging Song, and concluded: "The man, if it needs saying, is a marvel".

More controversial was
Domingo's Wagner...
I rather suspected a fad

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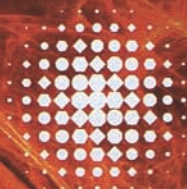
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* Bryn Terfel performs on Friday and Sunday only

Valery Gergiev: photo Marco Borggreve Bryn Terfel: photo Brian Farr



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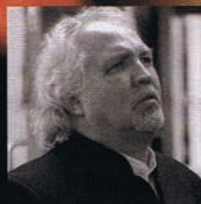
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A crowning moment:
Domingo recorded
his *Tristan* alongside
Antonio Pappano



The keenly anticipated *Tristan und Isolde* was reviewed, also by AB, in September 2005. In the previous number appeared an article with interviews by Erica Jeal who wrote that "it can't help but be seen as a kind of apotheosis of his recording career". The conductor Antonio Pappano drew attention specially, quoting the phrase "Furchtbare Trank": "I don't think he's ever gone that far and found something like that." John Allison provided a second review: "A committed and communicative performance, and he rises to the height of Act 3." AB added that it "truly crowned his career as a tenor".

That last phrase no doubt implied a reference to Domingo's many other activities – as director of the opera companies in Washington and Los Angeles, as conductor and (we now have to add) as baritone. The recording which might have pointed to that as an eventual direction is of the title-role in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* but that (12/92) falls within the earlier period. As conductor he has featured in a fine act of tenorial fraternity, directing the sympathetic accompaniment to José Cura in a Verdi recital (11/97). One other "extra" activity has now folded – the group of which he was a member, the celebrated act known as The Three Tenors. In their concert at the Dodgem Stadium in Los Angeles Domingo contributed a fine "Vesti la giubba" and gave an exemplary demonstration of how to sing

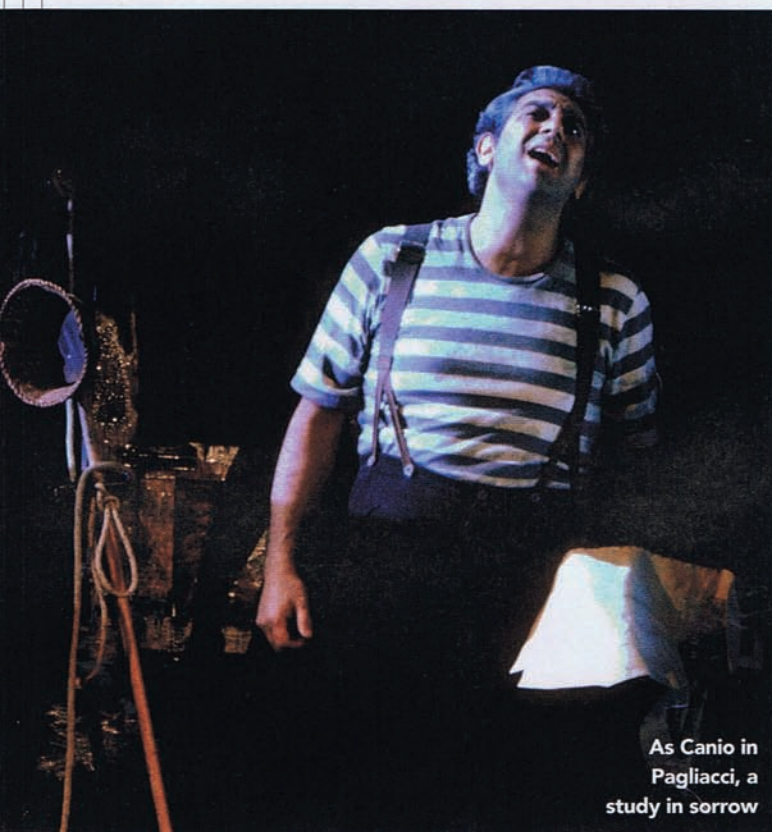
a popular song, "Amor, vida de mi vida" (12/94). The following year the Three Tenors won the *Gramophone* Award for the Best-Selling Disc, theirs clocking up a sale of seven and a half million.

Less conspicuous has been his support for Spanish music, including the works of Tomás Bretón: *La verbena de la paloma* (9/95) and *La Dolores* (2/00). His love of the zarzuelas and enthusiasm for Spanish opera are well documented, in Vives's *Doña Francisquita* (4/95), for instance, Gomes's *Guarany* (5/96) and as King Arthur in Albéniz's *Merlin* (11/00). Regular excursions into French opera have included *Hérodiade* (2/96; "muscular and non-Francophone" – Blyth). And his discography still abounds in surprises: Mercadante's *Il giuramento* (the part learnt in barely more than a day, saving Gerd Albrecht's Vienna concert performance; 2/07), *Das Lied von der Erde* (4/00), *Idomeneo* (1/97) and Puccini's rarely heard *Edgar* (6/06). And no mention yet, I see, of the Verdi album, with an aria from each of the 28 operas plus the Requiem, a monumental undertaking for most tenors, all in a month's work for Domingo. To repeat the words of our late colleague, Alan Blyth: "The man...is a marvel". ©

Visit Gramophone.net/more

The many faces of Plácido

Always one of opera's most accomplished actors, Domingo has inspired legions of fellow performers. Here, some famous colleagues recall the interpretations that most affected them



As Canio in
Pagliacci, a
study in sorrow

While I was auditioning in NY, my wife and I went to see Maestro Domingo perform Canio. During the whole performance, but especially in the famous aria, he made us all forget about the material world and guided us into the sublime.

His performance created a sensation of limitless freedom, and of a union of the souls of both performer and audience. As mysterious as this may sound, how he achieves this is not, in fact, a mystery: gifted with a gorgeous timbre, a long-trained awareness of his movements and his place on stage and a disarming musicality, he engages with the flow of music and emotions with all his being, instead of trying to impress the audience. He explored the clown Canio's sorrows to the point of making them not only Canio's,

but the sorrows of every person in the audience. And this was not any particular sorrow either, but the essence of that basic one which resides inside of all of us rational human beings. He is never alone on stage; he connects with every object there, with every other character, with every ray of light, and with every atom of energy in the hall.

Through all these laborious little aspects of his performance he becomes a very special drop of water, a tear perhaps that allows the light of music, art and emotions to go through him like the sunlight and create a rainbow in us, the overwhelmed audience. I feel extremely lucky to have experienced many a performance of one of the greatest performers of all time and the best opera singer ever.

Rolando Villazón

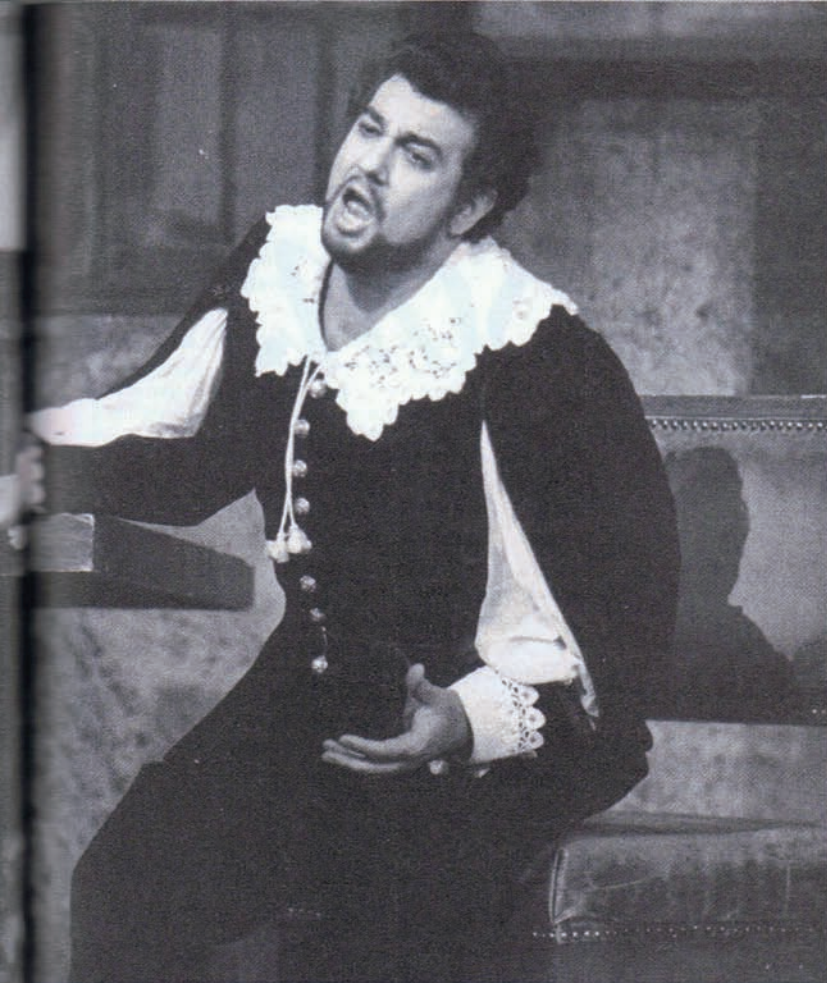
One of the great fundamental moments in my life as a young singer was witnessing Plácido's electrifying and passionate Otello in Elijah Moshinsky's production at Covent Garden in early 1987.

The film version had been out for some time with the same leads and it could easily have been a walk-through for Justino Díaz, Katia Ricciarelli and Plácido. But as soon as the momentous overture began, with an incandescent Carlos Kleiber conducting, the essence of live theatre ignited and Plácido's first utterance was a fanfare for what was to prove a devastating performance. His eyes aflame and focused, he portrayed Otello's meltdown in gradually intensifying flame-brilliant stages. Everything was internalised and yet his clarion voice was a beacon of his doom, without ever letting the voice be sacrificed to the cause. The final "Un bacio..." pierced me and has left me wounded to this day. If there was any chance I might offer the same in any of my own performing, this was the origin of my commitment.

Gerald Finley

**Otello at Covent
Garden, the essence
of live theatre for
Gerald Finley**



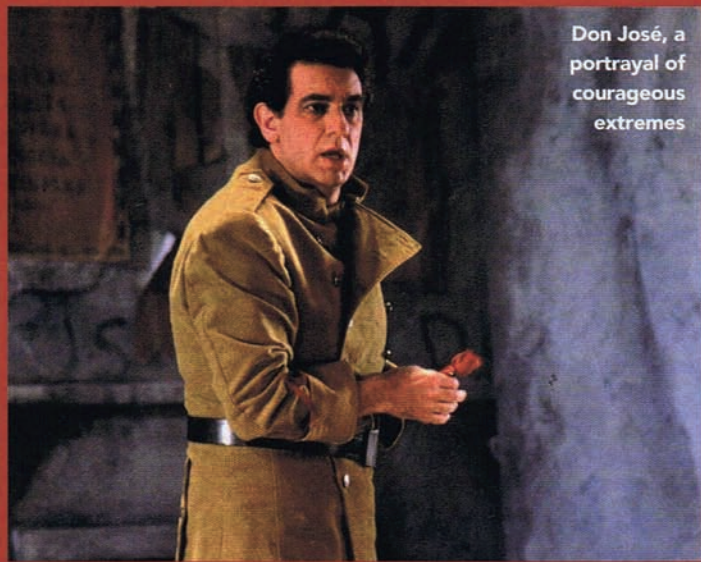


**As Rodolfo:
Thomas
Hampson
found it
overwhelming**

I have so many fond and inspiring images, memories and experiences of Plácido that it is hard to choose.

As a student I heard and saw Plácido often in concert in Los Angeles. I collected his recordings and inhaled the passion, accuracy and sheer magnetism of his vocalism. I sang with him for the first time in *La bohème* in LA for the opening of the new LA Opera Company there and spent most of the time pinching myself to see if I was dreaming. The adjectives that always come to mind when reflecting on the great man as singer, colleague, Arts Factotum or friend are “generous”, “passionate”, “caring”, “dedicated”, “determined”, “human”, and of course “glorious”, “impassioned”, “unbelievably musical”, “stunning”... All of those adjectives applied to his Rodolfo in that *Bobème*. He is, and will remain for some time, the embodiment of the ideals, abilities and standards professional musicians of all genres will and should aspire to.

Thomas Hampson



**Don José, a
portrayal of
courageous
extremes**

The year 1984 was my debut at the Chicago Lyric as Micaëla. Plácido Domingo was singing Don José.

Everything about this singer was amazing: voice timbre, looks, musicianship, kindness. But what impressed me most at the time was his ability to sing real *piano*. With such a robust voice! And in such a big house! And it was carrying!

Every singer enjoys the feeling of letting the voice “out”. But singing *piano* takes courage. I recognised Plácido’s willingness to put in the extra effort and go for more extremes in his portrayal. This inspired me to do the same, or at least try.

After a few failed attempts trying the obvious, I realised that thinking of *piano* and *forte* as decibel values won’t work. I discovered that *piano* represents a special *idea* of a composer, more intimate or more secretive, for example.

I’ve kept this aspiration, to take portrayals to the extremes, for 25 years and now insist on it with my students. Plácido Domingo therefore not only inspired me and my singing but is indirectly influencing the hundreds of young singers I now work with worldwide. **Cheryl Studer**

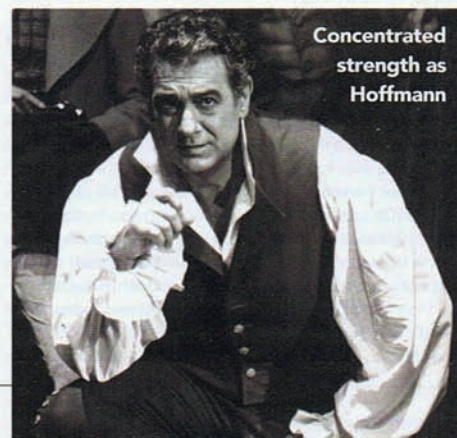
Of all the roles I performed with Plácido – *Tosca*, *Otello* and all three ladies in *Hoffmann* – it probably was most amazing to be close to him during the *Hoffmann* with which we opened the Metropolitan Opera season with James Levine and Sam Ramey.

Plácido’s concentration during that taxing role was

remarkable and a lesson in how to keep your voice not only beautiful but fresh, as well as strong, during a long, difficult and emotional part. While the Doll scene was scary for me – fun and athletic for him – and the Antonia act a joy to sing – lovingly warm in his voice – it was the immense strength he showed in the Giulietta

act that most moved me. It gave me immense inspiration every single night and deepened the respect that I had already had for him for years. He was technically aware of where his voice was on *every note* in that act and I will never forget those performances.

Carol Vaness



**Concentrated
strength as
Hoffmann**

The New Seasons

The world's leading orchestras and opera houses have announced their autumn/winter programmes. *Gramophone* picks the choice offerings

United Kingdom



Catch BBC NOW at Wales Millennium Centre

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

BBC NOW presents 12 evening concerts at St David's Hall and a series of afternoon concerts at the brand new Hoddinott Hall at Wales Millennium Centre. Music from the First and Second Viennese Schools will be featured, as will "Cellofest", a celebration of the instrument featuring leading exponents including Alban Gerhardt, Guy Johnston and Paul Watkins. Hoddinott Hall plays host to composer portraits focusing on Simon Holt, Christian Jost and Bruno Mantovani.

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www.bbc.co.uk/nw

BBC Philharmonic

Celebrating its 75th anniversary in October 2009, the BBC Philharmonic joins forces with the Hallé in a Mahler cycle to mark the composer's 150th anniversary. The BBC Phil will perform Symphonies Nos 1, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10, pairing each symphony with the world premiere of a new work. HK Gruber is announced as the orchestra's new composer/conductor, making his formal debut with the UK premiere of *Busking* featuring trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger. Other guest soloists include Ian Bostridge, James Ehnes, Sergey Khachatryan, Alban Gerhardt and Louis Lortie.

+44 (0)161 244 4001

www.bbc.co.uk/philharmonic

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

This is the BBC SSO's first season under chief conductor Donald Runnicles, and he and principal guest conductor Ilan Volkov present "Maestros' Choice", six concerts showcasing their individual talents. "Bohemian Rhapsodies" marks the 50th anniversary of Martinů's death and the 20th of the Velvet Revolution, and also features music by Janáček and Dvořák's last three symphonies. "North By North-East" places Rachmaninov's three symphonies alongside music by Shostakovich, Sibelius (the Violin Concerto with Nicola Benedetti) and Britten.

+44 (0)141 353 8000

www.bbc.co.uk/bbcso

BBC Symphony Orchestra

Chief conductor Jiří Bělohlávek launches the season with the first instalment of a Martinů symphony cycle. Guest soloists include Barry Douglas, Elisabeth Leonskaja, Frank Peter Zimmermann and Jennifer Pike, and the BBC Symphony Chorus joins the orchestra in Requiem by Brahms, Mozart and Roman Maciejewski. "Total Immersion" composer days are devoted to George Crumb, Hans Werner Henze and Wolfgang Rihm, and the orchestra is joined by a cast of Pythons for the UK premiere of Eric Idle's and John Du Prez's *Not the Messiah (He's a Very Naughty Boy)*, celebrating the 40th anniversary of Monty Python's *Flying Circus*.

+44 (0)845 120 7596

www.bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Kirill Karabits takes up his post as music director and to mirror his personal journey from Kiev to Dorset, the orchestra's season has an underlying "East to West" flavour. Karabits explores the rich musical culture of Russia through the music of Khachaturian, Tchaikovsky and Borodin, and follows émigré composers such as Rachmaninov, Stravinsky and the Czech Bohuslav Martinů as they made their way to Europe and America. Diversions are taken too – north for Nielsen and Sibelius, south for Respighi, Turina and Rodrigo – and British music by Elgar, Bridge and Britten represents the heart of the orchestra's tradition.

+44 (0)1202 669925

www.bsolive.com

Britten Sinfonia

The Cambridge-based Britten Sinfonia offers its widest range of concerts and events to date. Returning artists include Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Imogen Cooper, while new associations will be forged with musicians such as Christopher Hogwood, who conducts the opening concerts of the season. Wunderkind American composer Nico Muhly will be in residence during January and February. As well as a full schedule of UK concerts, the Sinfonia will make its debut at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, continue its residency in Kraków, and visit Spain, Mexico and Austria.

+44 (0)1223 300795

www.brittensinfonia.com

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Among the highlights of Andris Nelsons' second season as music director is a concert performance of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, shortly before the young conductor takes his interpretation to Bayreuth. Sir Simon Rattle returns to Birmingham to conduct Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Valery Gergiev brings his Mariinsky forces for two spectacular collaborations. The CBSO celebrates its centenary in 2020 and in each of the 10 years running up to the anniversary, the orchestra will focus on the music composed in the run-up to its foundation, starting with

the works of 1910.

+44 (0)121 780 3333

www.cbso.co.uk

English National Opera

ENO gave the UK premiere of Ligeti's "anti anti-opera" *Le Grand Macabre* in 1982, and this season the company gives the British stage premiere of the 1996 revision. Other new productions include *Turandot*, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (coupled with *The Rite of Spring* danced by Fabulous Beast), Deborah Warner's staging of Handel's *Messiah*, Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers*, *Tosca*, *The Pearl Fishers* and *Idomeneo*. There are revivals of Philip Glass's *Satyagraha*, Jonathan Miller's production of *Rigoletto*, David McVicar's *The Turn of the Screw*, David Alden's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and imported productions of *The Elixir of Love* from New York City Opera and *Katya Kabanova* from Dallas Opera.

+44 (0)870 145 0200

www.eno.org

The Hallé

The centrepiece of the Hallé's 2009/10 season is a cycle (shared with the BBC Philharmonic) of all 10 of Mahler's symphonies, to mark the composer's 150th anniversary. The Hallé will perform Nos 2 and 4 under Markus Stenz and Nos 5 and 9 under Sir Mark Elder. Each symphony will be preceded by the world premiere of a new work, with composers including Colin Matthews, Detlev Glanert, Uri Caine and Luke Bedford. Another thread binding the season is TEN2WATCH, for which 10 young artists, including cellist Natalie Clein and violinist Jennifer Pike, are invited to perform with the orchestra.

+44 (0)161 907 9000

www.halle.co.uk

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal conductor Vladimir Jurowski presides over "Between Two Worlds", a celebration of the music of Alfred Schnittke, as well as opening the season with Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*. Principal guest conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin explores French repertoire, while Osmo Vänskä conducts all seven symphonies plus other orchestral works by Sibelius. Marin Alsop conducts the music of her mentor Leonard Bernstein, and Kurt Masur dedicates his performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* to the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

+44 (0)20 7840 4242

www.lpo.org.uk

London Sinfonietta

The enterprising and innovative London Sinfonietta open their season with the UK premiere of John Adams's *Son of Chamber Symphony* and the European premiere of Paul Dresher's *Concerto for Violin and Electro-Acoustic Band*. This sets the tone for a series of concerts including world premieres of works by Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Alexander Nowak, Claudia Molitor,

Richard Barrett and Dai Fujikura, as well as UK premieres of works by Wolfgang Rihm and Richard Ayres, and a 50th birthday concert for George Benjamin. Many concerts take place at the Sinfonietta's new home at Kings Place, while the ensemble remains a resident orchestra at the Southbank Centre.
+44 (0)20 7928 0828
www.londonsinfonietta.org.uk

London Symphony Orchestra

Valery Gergiev conducts a series exploring the music of the past century "as seen through the eyes of Henri Dutilleul", and Sir Colin Davis embarks on a Nielsen symphony cycle. Operatic highlights include Verdi's *Otello* under Davis and Strauss's *Elektra* under Gergiev, while the London Symphony Chorus joins the orchestra for Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, Poulenc's *Gloria* and Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten*. Bernard Haitink conducts Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, Daniel Harding conducts Mahler's Sixth and Tenth Symphonies, and Marin Alsop marshals multimedia forces for Philip Glass's *LIFE, A Journey Through Time*. And don't miss Gergiev conducting Messiaen's fervid *Turangalila-Symphonie*.
+44 (0)845 120 7591
www.lso.co.uk

Manchester Camerata

The Manchester Camerata's season theme is "Exchanges" – musical, cultural and ideological – exploring composers' influence upon each other, and the effect of exchanges between different musical traditions and between music and poetry. Key events include an evening devoted to the "Spirit of Tango", a semi-staged performance of Handel's *Belshazzar*, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with soprano Jane Irwin, live recordings of two more Beethoven symphonies and a cluster of commissions and premieres.
+44 (0)161 907 9000
www.manchestercamerata.co.uk

Northern Sinfonia

The Northern Sinfonia under music director Thomas Zehetmair goes from strength to strength at its waterfront home, The Sage Gateshead. Highlights of the season include a performance of Handel's *Theodora* under Nicholas McGegan with Carolyn Sampson in the title-role, and Bach's complete Cello Suites and Brandenburg Concertos over two evenings with cellist Adrian Brendel and director Laurence Cummings. Ilya Gringolts performs Berg's Violin Concerto under Stéphane Denève, and other guest artists include Dame Evelyn Glennie (James MacMillan's *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*), Imogen Cooper (continuing her survey of Mozart's piano concertos), HK Gruber, Heinz Holliger and Olli Mustonen.
+44 (0)191 443 4661
www.thesagegateshead.org/sinfonia

Opera North

After a tour in August to the Bregenz Festival, Opera North returns to its beautifully restored Leeds home, the Howard Assembly Room, to open the season with a revival of Tim Albery's production of *Così fan tutte*. Janáček's *The Adventures of Mr Brouček* is a co-production with Scottish Opera, and Alice Coote makes her role debut as Charlotte in a new production of Massenet's *Werther*. Puccini's *La bohème*, Gilbert & Sullivan's *Ruddigore*, Dvořák's *Rusalka* and Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* also feature during the season.
+44 (0)113 223 3500
www.operanorth.co.uk

Philharmonia Orchestra

Principal conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen brings to a climax his nine-month exploration of the music of Vienna, 1900-1935, with a semi-staged performance of Berg's *Wozzeck*. Nikolai Lugansky embarks on a cycle of Rachmaninov's four piano concertos and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, while other guest soloists include Hélène Grimaud, Nicola Benedetti, Piotr Anderszewski

Salonen concludes his Viennese series



and Viktoria Mullova. Christoph von Dohnányi conducts an 80th birthday gala, and there are concerts by Lorin Maazel (including Mahler's Ninth Symphony), Sir Charles Mackerras (Wagner, Humperdinck and Beethoven) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn).
+44 (0)800 652 6717
www.philharmonia.co.uk

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Still basking in the success of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture, principal conductor Vasily Petrenko is the guiding light for the season, welcoming guest artists including Baiba Skride in Sibelius, Arcadi Volodos in Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet in Ravel's Concerto in G, Ingrid Fliter in Chopin's Second Concerto and Jean-Yves Thibaudet in Grieg. Choral highlights include Verdi's *Quattro pezzi sacri* and Mahler's Second and Third Symphonies under Petrenko, and Weinberg's Requiem under Thomas Sanderling.
+44 (0)151 709 3789
www.liverpoolphil.com

Royal Opera House

Plácido Domingo makes two appearances with the Royal Opera, singing the title-role in *Simon Boccanegra* and, earlier, the role of Bajazet in Handel's *Tamerlano*. New productions include *Tristan und Isolde* starring Ben Heppner and Nina Stemme, Tchaikovsky's *The Tsarina's Slippers* directed by Francesca Zambello, Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, for which conductor Antonio Pappano teams up once again with director Richard Jones, *Aida*, conducted by Nicola Luisotti and directed by David McVicar, and *Manon*, in which Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón are conducted by Pappano and directed by Laurent Pelly. The season opens with two concert performances of *Linda di Chamounix* under Mark Elder, while revivals include *Il turco in Italia*, Zambello's *Carmen*, McVicar's *Le nozze di Figaro* and, from 2007, *The Rake's Progress*, the double-bill of *L'heure espagnole* and *Gianni Schicchi* and *La fille du régiment* starring Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flórez.
+44 (0)20 7304 4000
www.roh.org.uk

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

The RPO opens its 2009/10 season with tours of Europe and Japan before returning to its Chelsea home, Cadogan Hall, where Lara St John performs Paganini's Violin

Concerto No 2 and Andrew Litton presents a Gershwin evening. Guests in the orchestra's Royal Festival Hall residency include Renée Fleming, Vadim Repin (Tchaikovsky), Yuja Wang (Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto), Freddy Kempf (Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto) and Chloë Hanslip (Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto).
+44 (0)20 7608 8840
www.rpo.co.uk

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

Stéphane Denève's fifth season as the RSNO's music director features a "Words and Music" theme, exploring the connection between major orchestral works and the written word, an anniversary cycle of Schumann's symphonies, and choral blockbusters including Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and the Requiems of Britten and Fauré. The orchestra welcomes guest conductors Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Yakov Kreizberg and Jakub Hrůša, and two Järvis mount the podium: conductor laureate Neeme conducts Henk de Vliet's condensed version of *Tristan und Isolde*, and his son Kristjan makes his fourth appearance with the orchestra.
+44 (0)141 226 3868
www.rsno.org.uk

Scottish Chamber Orchestra

The SCO welcomes its new principal conductor Robin Ticciati, who is joined by mezzos Magdalena Kožená and Karen Cargill for his opening concerts. The orchestra celebrates the 75th birthday of composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, the 50th of James MacMillan and Kenneth Leighton's 80th anniversary, and there are world premieres by Edward Harper and Erkki-Sven Tüür. There are appearances from conductor laureate Sir Charles Mackerras in Strauss, Christian Zacharias in Schubert, and Maria João Pires in Beethoven conducted by Trevor Pinnock.
+44 (0)131 557 6800
www.sco.org.uk

Scottish Opera

The Glasgow-based company bookends its season with Janáček, opening with *Káťa Kabanová* in September and launching a new co-production (with Opera North) of *The Adventures of Mr Brouček* in April. In between it's a feast of *bel canto*, with revivals of *L'elisir d'amore* and *La bohème*, and a new co-production (with New Zealand Opera) of *L'italiana in Algeri* starring Karen Cargill as Isabella.
+44 (0)141 240 1133
www.scottishopera.org.uk

Ulster Orchestra

Celebration is the theme of the Ulster Orchestra's season, with anniversaries Handel, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin and Cherubini honoured – not to mention the 70th birthday of James Galway. Guest performers include Stephan Kovacevich in Beethoven, Tine Thing Helseth in Haydn and Hummel, and Bryn Terfel and Catrin Finch in a popular gala concert.
+44 (0)28 9023 9955
www.ulsterorchestra.com

Welsh National Opera

Wales's national and touring opera company presents its first season under the music directorship of Lothar Koenigs with new productions of *La traviata*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in a 1920s setting on the Orient Express, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, in which Bryn Terfel makes his role debut as Hans Sachs. Alongside revivals of *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Carmen* and *Rigoletto*, there's also another chance to see Berg's searing *Wozzeck* in the production with which the company launched its first season at the Wales Millennium Centre in 2005.
+44 (0)29 2063 5000
www.wno.org.uk

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Europe

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome

"Despite the funding cuts taking place these days in every cultural sector", the Accademia promises "an exciting 2009-10 season". Music director Antonio Pappano presents Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* with soprano Emma Bell; a series of Russian evenings featuring Leif Ove Andsnes, Viktoria Postnikova and Gidon Kremer; Michael Tilson Thomas conducting his own *Street Song*; Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto with Mitsuko Uchida; Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with Ian Bostridge; Brahms's Second Symphony conducted by Kurt Masur; Tan Dun conducting his own works; Mahler's Second Symphony with Nicole Cabell; and Brahms's Second and Third Symphonies under Georges Prêtre. +39 068082058 www.santacecilia.it

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Boasting a season of "thrilling variety", director Mariss Jansons offers symphonic treats by Schumann and Schubert alongside Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra and Berlioz's *L'enfance du Christ*. Also featured are the continuation of Jansons's Beethoven cycle, a tour to Japan with soloists Midori and Yo-Yo Ma, and guest appearances from conductors Sir Colin Davis, Bernard Haitink, Ton Koopman and Seiji Ozawa, and soloists Lang Lang, Bernadette Fink, Gerald Finley, Christian Gerhaher, Matthias Goerne, Mark Padmore and Andreas Scholl. +49 89 5900 4545 www.br-online.de

Bergen Philharmonic

Music director Andrew Litton works with Leif Ove Andsnes in Rachmaninov, Janine Janson in Tchaikovsky, Lisa Milne in Mahler, Julian Rachlin in Shostakovich and Barbara Frittoli with the Bergen Philharmonic Choir. Other collaborations include Neeme Järvi conducting Vadim Gluzman in Bruch, Nikolaj Znaider conducting Mahler with baritone Roman Trekel, and Bramwell Tovey conducting the world premiere of Ernest Tomlinson's Concerto for Comet with soloist Martin Winter. +47 815 33 133 www.filharmonien.no

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Artistic director Sir Simon Rattle presents a typically varied and well-organised programme: a double Brahms and Mahler portrait paints the former as "progressive" and the latter as "traditionalist"; the seven symphonies of Sibelius are shown to "eschew programmatic interpretation"; "Music from Hungary" explores composers from Liszt to Ligeti; "Major Choral Works" includes Haydn's *Seasons* and Brahms's *German Requiem*; "United Classics" commemorates the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall; the Lieder recital



Philharmonic Hall, Berlin

series features performances from Cecilia Bartoli, Gerald Finley and Anne Sofie von Otter; and resident Lang Lang heads up the piano recital series. Also on hand is a sparkling array of guest conductors and soloists,

including Gustavo Dudamel, Zubin Mehta, Donald Runnicles, Lars Vogt, Hélène Grimaud and András Schiff. +49 30 254 88 999 www.berliner-philharmoniker.de

Budapest Festival Orchestra

Music director Iván Fischer leads a season of tours to Spain, Germany, Italy and Greece, plus first-rate concerts on the home platform. Cellist Giovanni Sollima premieres his own *Folk Tales*; pianist Boris Berezovsky performs Khachaturian; cellist Steven Isserlis presents "??? – Bag of Surprises"; violinist Christian Tetzlaff performs Joachim; pianist Nikolai Demidenko plays Liszt; and there are concert series devoted to Wagner and Stravinsky, and Beethoven Symphonies Nos 4 and 6. +36 1 355 4015 www.bfz.hu

Czech Philharmonic Orchestra

The Czech Phil's 114th season is the first under new principal conductor Elihu Inbal. The orchestra performs in the UK with Jakub Hruša, in Japan with Herbert Blomstedt, in Russia with Ion Marin, and in Germany with Nikolaj Znaider and Manfred Honeck. Concerts in the Phil's own Dvořák Hall include Jiří Bělohlávek conducting Martinů and Mahler symphonies; Leonard Slatkin conducting Haydn and Tchaikovsky symphonies; Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducting Schumann and Martinů; and Stephen Hough performing Saint-Saëns's Fifth Piano Concerto under Pinchas Steinberg. +420 227 059 227 www.ceskafilharmonie.cz

Staatskapelle Dresden

Another year and another top notch programme from Staatskapelle Dresden with a plethora of conductors and musicians happy to join director Fabio Luisi's longstanding orchestra in some world-class music making. Luisi conducts Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*, *Sinfonia domestica* and *Macbeth*. Also on hand are Charles Dutoit conducting Ravel's Piano Concerto in G with Martha Argerich; Christoph Eschenbach conducting Schnittke's Viola Concerto with David Aaron Carpenter; Vladimir Jurowski conducting Tchaikovsky's First Symphony; Zubin Mehta conducting Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with baritone Thomas Quasthoff; and Sir Colin Davis conducting Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with Paul Groves and Sarah Connolly. +49 351 4911705 www.semperoper.de

Opera alla Scala, Milan

La Scala presents 19 operas and ballets, including nine new productions, plus more than 60 symphonic, vocal and chamber concerts. The season opens with *Carmen*, conducted by Daniel Barenboim and directed by Emma Dante. Later in the year Barenboim also conducts *Das Rheingold* starring René Pape – the first in a new Ring cycle to be performed over the coming seasons. The series also welcomes outstanding conductors – Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, Daniele Gatti and Antonio Pappano to name just a few – and singers including Jonas Kaufmann, Juan Diego Flórez, Joyce DiDonato and Rolando Villazón. Plácido Domingo takes the leading role in *Simon Boccanegra* in April and celebrates his 40 years at La Scala in December. +39 02 88 79 1 www.teatroallascala.org

Orchestre de Paris

Music director Christoph Eschenbach's jam-packed season ranges from Haydn's Symphony No 99 to Nielsen's Symphony No 5, and from Britten's *War Requiem* with Paul Groves and Matthias Goerne to Golijov's *La Passion según San Marcos* with the Labèque sisters. Outstanding guest performers and conductors feature, including Daniel Barenboim in Chopin's Piano Concertos; Sergey Khachatryan in Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto; Truls Mørk in Elgar's Cello

Concerto under Osmo Vänskä; and Pierre Boulez conducting two concerts. Eschenbach himself conducts Mahler's Third and Prokofiev's Fifth Symphonies, and directs Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos 12 and 23 from the keyboard. +33 1 42 56 13 13 www.orchestredeparis.com

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam

The RCO embarks on a two-year Mahler project in 2009, and will perform all ten symphonies by the end of 2010-11: this season Daniel Harding, principal conductor Mariss Jansons, Iván Fischer and Daniele Gatti conduct Symphonies Nos 1-5. Other highlights include Jansons conducting Shostakovich and Beethoven; Neeme Järvi conducting Hindemith and Prokofiev with cellist Alban Gerhardt; Mark Elder conducting Shostakovich and Mozart with soloist Jonathan Biss; Bernard Haitink conducting "A Christmas Matinee"; Vadim Repin performing Beethoven under Yuri Temirkanov; and John Eliot Gardiner conducting Haydn and Schumann. +31 20 671 8345 www.concertgebouwamsterdam.nl

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Vienna's Musikverein plays host to works by Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, Debussy, Elgar, Prokofiev, Schoenberg, Strauss, Wagner, Webern and Widmann throughout the season, and also sees performances of works by Boulez and Maazel, each conducted by the composer. Guest conductors include Georges Prêtre, who leads the highly popular New Year's Concert; Sir Simon Rattle, who conducts *The Dream of Gerontius* with singers Magdalena Kožená and Thomas Quasthoff; and Valery Gergiev, who conducts Elgar's Violin Concerto with soloist Nikolaj Znaider. The orchestra also embarks upon weeklong tours to Japan and the USA, and performs concerts in China, Greece and Turkey. +43 1 505 65 25 www.wienerphilharmoniker.at

Teatro Real, Madrid

Teatro Real presents productions of Haydn's *La vera costanza* conducted by music director Jesús López Cobos; Janáček's *Jenůfa* conducted by Ivor Bolton; Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* starring Hans-Peter König and Anja Kampe; Robert Carsen's production of Strauss's *Salome* starring Nina Stemme; Bellini's *I puritani* with Juan Diego Flórez; Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with Danielle de Niese; Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* conducted by Pinchas Steinberg; and Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* with top-drawer names Plácido Domingo and Angela Gheorghiu. +34 902 24 48 48 www.teatro-real.com



Daniel Harding will be conducting Mahler with the RCO

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USA

Baltimore Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop is now firmly ensconced as Baltimore's music director until August 2015, and her third season at the orchestra's helm bears out that stability with an air of real confidence. Pianist Lang Lang kicks off the concert series with Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and a host of impressive guest soloists follow – James Ehnes in Tchaikovsky, Leila Josefowicz in Adams, Jean-Yves Thibaudet in Gershwin, Garrick Ohlsson in Beethoven, Itzhak Perlman in Bach and Gil Shaham in Stravinsky. The season features works ranging from Brahms and Schumann to the world premiere of Leshnoff's *Starburst*, and includes appearances from guest conductors Louis Langrée, Robert Spano and Jiří Bělohlávek.

+1 410 783 8000
www.bsomusic.org

Boston Symphony Orchestra

The Boston Symphony continues its reputation for musical excellence with a packed season. Music director James Levine maintains his important artistic presence in 15 programmes, including the complete Beethoven Symphonies, Mahler's Fourth and Seventh Symphonies, Strauss's *Four Last Songs* with Renée Fleming and premieres by Carter, Harbison, Lieberman and John Williams. Two BSO co-commissions – James MacMillan's *St John Passion* and Augusta Read Thomas's *Helios Chorus II* – receive their American premieres. A notable list of guest conductors and soloists appear – conductor emeritus Bernard Haitink in three weeks of concerts, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Colin Davis, Christoph von Dohnányi, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Yo-Yo Ma, Christine Brewer, Joshua Bell, Hilary Hahn, Evgeny Kissin and Emanuel Ax.

+1 617 266 1200 / +1 888 266 1200

www.bso.org

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Chicago benefits from the unique collaboration of its three distinguished leaders – principal conductor Bernard Haitink, conductor emeritus Pierre Boulez and music director designate Riccardo Muti. Haitink concludes his tenure as principal this year with a three-week European tour, Bruckner's Ninth Symphony and a Beethoven Festival featuring all nine symphonies. At 85, Boulez is celebrated with a month-long festival, including concert performances of Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and world premieres by Dai Fujikura and Johannes Boris Borowski. Muti, meanwhile, conducts Brahms's *German Requiem* and Bruckner's Symphony No 2. Further highlights are back-to-back *Passions* by Golijov and Bach; the premiere of Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky's Cello Concerto with Yo-Yo Ma; and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* under Michael Tilson Thomas.

+1 312 294 3000

www.cso.org

Cleveland Orchestra

Eight years into his term as Cleveland's music director, Franz Welser-Möst is seeking to strengthen ties between orchestra and community. The new "Community Music Initiative" offers school and family events, a benefit performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, early Friday evening concerts and "Musically Speaking Sundays" with commentary about major symphonic works. Welser-Möst also conducts symphonies by Shostakovich and Bruckner, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Adès's Violin Concerto with Leila Josefowicz. Returning guest artists include Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Measha Brueggergosman and Truls Mørk.

+1 216 231 1111
www.clevelandorchestra.com

Los Angeles Opera

Not content with staging two operas from Wagner's Ring cycle last season, this year general director Plácido Domingo presents three complete Rings conducted by music director James Conlon. The additions – *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* – are presented both separately and as part of the finished quartet. A packed programme also includes the company premiere of Handel's *Tamerlano* starring Domingo, and the US premiere of Schreker's *The Stigmatized* as part of the "Recovered Voices" project. Celebrated singers Juan Diego Flórez, Anja Kampe, Nathan Gunn, Thomas Hampson and Renée Fleming all make appearances.

+1 213 972 8001

www.losangelesopera.com

LA Philharmonic

It's all change at the LA Phil as new music director Gustavo Dudamel embarks upon his inaugural season. "¡Bienvenido Gustavo!", a free day-long celebration at Hollywood Bowl welcomes the young conductor with a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The festivities continue with the inaugural gala at Walt



Disney Concert Hall, featuring the world premiere of Adams's *City Noir* and Mahler's First Symphony. The season proper is marked by several mini-festivals, among them "Americas and Americans", and "West Coast: Left Coast" honouring "the creative spirit of California", directed by new LA creative chair John Adams. Additional high points include premieres of nine commissioned works; appearances from Leonard Slatkin, Christoph Eschenbach, Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel and Thomas Adès; and an America-wide tour.

+1 323 850 2000

www.laphil.com

Metropolitan Opera, New York

The Met launches an impressive eight new productions in 2009-10, the first season to be planned entirely under managing powerhouse Peter Gelb. Four of these – Rossini's *Armida*, Verdi's *Attila*, Janáček's *From the House of the Dead* and Shostakovich's *The Nose* – are company premieres, while the remaining four – Bizet's *Carmen*, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Thomas's *Hamlet*, and Puccini's *Tosca* – are guaranteed hits. The season revives a further 18 productions, and features the expected roster of big names – music director James Levine, Pierre Boulez, Riccardo Muti, Valery Gergiev, Andris Nelsons, Anna Netrebko, Angela Gheorghiu, Roberto Alagna, Simon Keenlyside and Renée Fleming. The successful "Met: Live in HD" series also returns with nine live transmissions.

+1 212 362 6000

www.metoperafamily.org

New York City Opera

Despite its recent leadership and financial difficulties, City Opera's season slogan – "Rediscover New York City Opera" – demonstrates the company's determination to make a fresh start under new general manager George

Steel. Events begin with "American Voices", featuring selections from American opera and musicals with Joyce DiDonato and Anthony Dean Griffey. Five staged operas make up the season proper – Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Weisgall's *Esther*, Chabrier's *L'Etoile*, Mark Lamos's award-winning *Madama Butterfly* and Handel's *Partenope* – performed in the newly renovated David H Koch Theater.

+1 212 870 5570

www.nycopera.com

New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert announces his arrival as music director with the introduction of several initiatives: Magnus Lindberg becomes the new Philharmonic composer-in-residence for two years; baritone Thomas Hampson is artist-in-residence for the season; and the first annual three-week Philharmonic Festival is devoted to "The Russian Symphony" conducted by Valery Gergiev. Gilbert conducts three world premieres and the New York first performance of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*; Mahler's Symphony No 3, Schoenberg's *Pelleas and Melisande* and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*; plus the Philharmonic's Vietnam debut. The orchestra also welcomes visiting artists Vladimir Jurowski, Kurt Masur, Antonio Pappano, Xian Zhang, Lisa Batiashvili, Frank Peter Zimmermann, Leif Ove Andnes, Emanuel Ax and Andrés Schiff.

+1 212 875 5656

www.nyphil.org

Philadelphia Orchestra

Chief conductor Charles Dutoit resumes his focus on the music of Hector Berlioz and the Ballets Russes from last season with Berlioz's *Resurrexit*, *Te Deum* and *Symphonie fantastique*, and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*. Other highlights include Barber anniversary celebrations, the Philadelphia premiere of Richard Danielpour's *A Woman's Life*, the world premiere of George Walker's Violin Concerto, the completion of Christoph Eschenbach's Mahler cycle with the Seventh Symphony, and Schumann's 200th anniversary. Guest artists Jaap van Zweden, Jiří Bělohlávek, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Neeme Järvi, Roger Norrington, Peter Oundjian, Nicholas Angelich, Yuja Wang, James Ehnes and Julia Fischer also appear.

+1 215 893 1999

www.philorch.org

San Francisco Opera

Nicola Luisotti's inaugural season in charge of San Francisco Opera heralds nine new productions, four of these – *Il Trovatore*, *Salome*, *Otello* and *La Fanciulla del West* – conducted by the music director. Also staged are *Il Trittico*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *La Fille du Régiment*, *Faust*, and *Die Walküre* conducted by Donald Runnicles with soprano Nina Stemme. Further artists of note appearing on the company stage include Diana Damrau, Juan Diego Flórez, Paolo Gavanelli, Deborah Voigt and Stephanie Blythe.

+1 415 864 3330

www.sfoopera.com

San Francisco Symphony

San Francisco music director Michael Tilson Thomas opens the season with a three-week Mahler festival, including Symphonies Nos 1 and 5, *Rückert Songs* with Susan Graham and *Songs of a Wayfarer* with Thomas Hampson. A celebration of Bach follows featuring the *Brandenburg Concertos* and the *Christmas Oratorio*. Particular emphasis is also given to composer George Benjamin and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, both "Project San Francisco" residents given the opportunity to "explore their vision, create new works and collaborate with the San Francisco Symphony" over the course of several weeks. Emanuel Ax is in the spotlight too, performing three recitals, each including a new work co-commissioned by the Symphony by composers Peter Lieberman, Osvaldo Golijov and John Adams.

+1 415 864 6000

www.sfsymphony.org

Tilson Thomas
brings Mahler to
San Francisco

METHOD AND MADNESS

Pierrot lunaire is among the most explicit and inscrutable of Schoenberg's expressionist works. **Philip Clark** immerses himself in 70 years of recordings of this moonstruck masterpiece



In October 1912, when Arnold Schoenberg's melodrama *Pierrot lunaire* was premiered in Berlin, a 30-minute composition that danced on the brink of lunacy – and then jumped in – was something quite unheralded. Written for a singer who doesn't sing (the narrator half sings, half speaks using Schoenberg's own refined version of *Sprechstimme*) and a five piece flute-clarinet-violin-cello-piano ensemble that isn't properly five pieces (viola, piccolo and bass clarinet instrumental doublings help slip the listener into a twilight zone of obsessive tick-tocks, compulsive music-box chimes and black-dog doom), *Pierrot lunaire* was explicitly insane. Enough to change music for ever.

The *commedia dell'arte* archetype of part man-made, part feeling puppet was a period obsession. Igor Stravinsky's 1911 ballet *Petrushka* dealt with a similar subject, but where Stravinsky was stylised and emotionally detached, Schoenberg's puppet portrayed the claustrophobic, disorientating clinch of madness itself.

Pierrot becomes intoxicated by the moon at the start of the piece, and fantasises about love, sexual conquests and religion. Then Part 2 gets nasty, as his nightmare world of guilt and punishment spirals: giant moths blot out the sun and his grave-robbing, blaspheming wrongdoing almost lands his neck in the gallows. In the final part he journeys home, abandoning his menace, and attempts to regain a fairy-tale innocence. If

Petrushka is "cool", *Pierrot lunaire* is "hot" – exactly the sort of piece that ought to have been written as Sigmund Freud was opening doors onto the subconscious.

Unlike, say, *The Rite of Spring*, *Pierrot's* lurid immediacy has continued to resist containment within the mainstream and will evermore be music of now – and of the future. Its emotional inscape loomed into sight with the expressionist woe of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909), depicting a woman's terror-stricken search for her lover in the deathly gloom of a forest. The catalyst for *Pierrot's* creation was the actress, wannabe singer and melodrama expert Albertine Zehme. Her speciality was declaiming poetry over Chopin's piano music, and she regularly performed settings by Otto Wrieslander of Albert Giraud's *Pierrot lunaire* poems. But Wrieslander's pallid music was no match for Giraud's troubling imagery, and the suggestion was made that she approached Schoenberg: a man, apparently, fully primed in the "bizarre".

ATONALITY AND NUMEROLOGY

Would Schoenberg have assembled *Pierrot* as effectively after his adoption of twelve-tone technique in 1924? That's debatable, even doubtful. *Pierrot* was the last of his works to be expressed in a freely atonal language but tonality continues to haunt its surface, obliging us to view familiar musical objects through warped perspectives. The power

A caricature by Benedikt
Fred Dolbin (1883-1971) of
Schoenberg conducting
Pierrot lunaire in 1940



of Schoenberg's writing lies precisely in this exacting ambiguity: a wholly appropriate language for music perched between absurdity and darkness, singing and speech, concert-hall "art" music and faux-theatre, and an embrace of pleasure and malice, desire and melancholy, madness and innocence. Atonality becomes a "dulled" tonality, but also a powerfully expressive tool in itself as atonal motifs embed themselves inside our brains for their transformation and distortion.

But to this "madness" there was intricate method. Schoenberg was obsessed with numerology and an ecosystem of numerical relationships anchored his imagination. The score is subtitled "Three times seven poems by Albert Giraud": three multiplied by seven equals 21 – *Pierrot* was Schoenberg's Opus 21, and from Giraud's collection of 50 poems he chose 21 to set. Schoenberg began the piece on March 12, 1912, and divided it into three parts, each containing seven poems. Five instrumentalists, one narrator and a conductor equals seven performers; a seven-note melodic motif symbolises *Pierrot*; in the third song, "Der Dandy", *Pierrot* is first mentioned in bar 21.

Schoenberg suffered from triskaidekaphobia – a fear of the number 13 – and, unhappily for him, the strict rondeaux form of Giraud's poetry equated to 13 lines per poem. While respecting Giraud's forms, Schoenberg does his utmost to disrupt the regular 13-line cyclic refrain; although surely it's no coincidence that the deathly chill of

"Beheading" – where our hero nearly meets his sticky end – appears as number 13.

PIONEERING PIERROT

For all its inscrutable reputation, the recording industry has looked kindly upon *Pierrot lunaire*. It's our loss that the trailblazing versions by Bethany Beardslee (with Robert Craft in 1963) and Jan DeGaetani (with Arthur Weisberg in 1970) are no longer available; similarly Cleo Laine's vinyl-only 1974 performance with the Nash Ensemble under Elgar Howarth is deserving of reassessment. The intriguing notion of a *Pierrot* featuring Icelandic popster Björk was mooted in 1996, when Kent Nagano persuaded her to perform it at the Verbier Festival. Nothing has ever materialised but determined bootleggers have released extracts into a murky lo-fi underground. The prospect of a sanctioned performance remains enticing.

Pierrot's official history on record dates back to September 1940, when Schoenberg and actress Erika Stiedry-Wagner entered a Los Angeles recording studio. How to interpret *Sprechstimme*? That's the most pressing concern for anyone approaching the work. Schoenberg requires a voice with an unusually extended range, equally comfortable with growling low notes and sustained falsetto squeaking. In his introduction to the published score, Schoenberg asserts that "the sung tone maintains

THE WILD CARD

Erika Sziklay; Budapest Chamber Orchestra / **András Mihály**
Hungaroton © HCD11385

A *Pierrot* that sounds like no other: Mihály makes the ensemble sound like a folk band and Sziklay's East European accent gives a unique colour. In fact, a *Pierrot* that sounds like Bartók!



the pitch unaltered; the spoken tone does indicate it, but immediately abandons it again by falling or rising". In practice this usually results in hovering, stylised *glissandi*, but Stiedry-Wagner takes wild liberties. Individual notes are habitually misspelled and intervallic relationships trashed, and often she fails to follow even the direction of a line. Pierre Boulez is among those who have highlighted an apparent compositional inconsistency. In, for example, "Parodie", Schoenberg creates rigorous canons between voice and viola, later voice and piccolo, that the eye can "hear" on the page but that interpreters of Stiedry-Wagner's ilk fail to realise aurally.

Mindful, perhaps, of the 40 gruelling rehearsals through which he coached Albertine Zehme, Schoenberg accepts the actualité that Stiedry-Wagner will never be musically equipped to deal with his challenging pitch demands: instead he nails *Pierrot*'s dramatic core. Even through unavoidable 1940s crackle (but admirably cleaned up by Columbia engineers), the vivid "nowness" of this performance is deeply affecting. Stiedry-Wagner demonstrates a different sort of accuracy: she is hypersensitive to the nuances of Giraud's poetry and her vocal tone is touched with other-worldly beauty.

As a rule of thumb, Schoenberg aims for a brittle ensemble sound world, and his pacing is relentlessly high-velocity. Eduard Steuermann's piano in the opening seconds projects with the *staccato* resonance of pebbles being struck together, but Rudolf Kolisch's first solo violin entry at 0'30" sings with near-Mahlerian lushness. Later Schoenberg injects an appropriate Romantic strain into the parodic "Valse de Chopin", but the sped-up hysteria of "Enthauptung" is like falling off reality's edge. "My music isn't modern, merely badly played," Schoenberg famously said: what a pity he didn't record more of it.

Paradoxically, **Hans Rosbaud's** 1957 recording, featuring **Jeanne Héricard's** narration and members of the Sinfonie-Orchester des Sudwestfunks, Baden-Baden, is "better" played but wholly uninvolved. Middle-grounded, pasty dynamics and articulation fatally compromise Schoenberg's dramatic impetus, and Rosbaud's cerebral coolness perhaps reflects that, in 1957, the name Schoenberg symbolised everything that was pure and clean-cut about serialism. Héricard is more horse-sure than Stiedry-Wagner – but that doesn't make this performance more "accurate". **Ilona Steingruber** in 1961, with a scratch group conducted by **Vladimir Golschmann**, finds the *Sprechstimme* hard going. She strains in the low register and resorts to failsafe singing when the going gets tough. The ensemble targets the notes but somehow misses the music, and this version can't compete with the riches to come.

THE RADICAL PERSPECTIVE

Salome Kammer; Ensemble Avantgarde / **Hans Zender**
MDG © MDG613 0579-2

Radical, yes, but respectful – Kammer's *Sprechstimme* reflects her interest in authentic early-20th-century opera and cabaret recordings, while Zender's composerly ear hears something fresh.



REPEAT PERFORMERS

Mary Thomas, in her 1973 performance with the London Sinfonietta and **David Atherton**, deploys a mix-and-match strategy to the *Sprechstimme* question: some numbers (such as "Gebet an Pierrot") sound positively operatic; others are crisply enunciated in heightened speech that has a tendency to morph towards singing when the emotional heat rises. But the dramatic muscle of her performance overwhelms a homogenised, prim Sinfonietta. John Constable's piano lacks urgency and Thomas's outpourings are met with anaemic instrumental tickles. Her superior 1973 performance with Peter Maxwell Davies's *Fires of London* remains stubbornly out of the catalogue.

Jane Manning, the Nash Ensemble and **Simon Rattle** in 1977 stab, not tickle. Manning's *Sprechstimme* is ideally positioned between speech and singing: her arsenal of sinister snarls to girly whimpers and her superhuman range hit the proper mood from the beginning and never falter. Rattle finds wondrous things inside Schoenberg's ensemble-writing. Numbers ending with those portentous piano tick-tocks are thoughtfully framed, pausing in frozen time. In "Nacht", the opening number of Part 2, Manning's deft pitching and the creepiness of flutter-tonguing bass clarinet, cello playing *sul pont* and the downwards spiral of the piano feel like a descent into hell itself. Schoenberg's lopsided waltzes in the third part are rendered faithful to their source. Rattle views *Pierrot* like unhinged *Lieder*. An earlier and more self-conscious Manning performance from 1967, with the Vesuvius Ensemble, is an important slice of history, but its arid recorded sound (Susan Bradshaw's piano being



Jane Manning: sinister snarls and girly whimpers

particularly boxy) detracts.

Also from 1977, **Pierre Boulez**, **Yvonne Minton** and an all-star ensemble (Daniel Barenboim, Michel Debost, Anthony Pay, Pinchas Zukerman and Lynn Harrell) deliver what has become known as the "sung Pierrot". Conspiracy or cock-up that the word *Sprechstimme* doesn't appear once in the sleeve-notes? This was Boulez's attempt to realise Schoenberg's pitch-based concepts; but without the *glissando*-hover of *Sprechstimme* some numbers sound unexpectedly stuffy, and others like hysterical ham. The ensemble-playing is obstinately polished but is also a charisma-free zone.

Boulez loses more than he gains by isolating pitch, but two later recordings redeem him. German soprano **Helga Pilarczyk's** 1961 performance with Boulez's Domaine Musical Ensemble (although the recent Accord reissue implies an uncondemned performance) is rather special. The recorded sound is not ideal – when lines get busy, textures muffle – but Pilarczyk's poised *Sprechstimme* is shamelessly expressive. The

ends of phrases have a tendency to shift towards pure singing but during the dramatic whirligig of "Enthauptung" she declaims the text with an alarmingly intense melodic bark.

And in 1997 Boulez touched on perfection, with the Ensemble Intercontemporain and **Christine Schäfer**. The musicologist Theodor Adorno said that *Erwartung* "developed the eternity of the second over 400 bars", and Boulez's account similarly removes itself from our earthly time. Schäfer's *Sprechstimme* is packed with inference and detail, while Boulez provokes another intriguing question by unifying ensemble and voice: is the voice really a member of the ensemble or does each instrumentalist discover his own inner Pierrot? In "Der kranke Mond", the last number of Part 1, voice and flute stalk each other neurotically, and Pierrot sounds gloomily vulnerable before descending towards hell. As an indicator of how holistically Boulez moulds the ensemble, check out the hybrid flute/bass clarinet tone he creates around 0'55" in "Madonna"; also cello *glissando* figurations at around 1'20", usually lost, speak up eloquently. In the final number, Boulez and Schäfer reach home more empathically than most. Boulez's composerly sensibility keeps Schoenberg's dialogue between tonality and atonality animatedly alive – so empathic, yes, but then no one else as powerfully works with the paradox that Schoenberg's artifice also provokes a hyped-up sense of reality.

A SPRECHSTIMME FOR EUROPE

What's the approach been of other central European composer-conductors to *Pierrot lunaire*? Reinbert de Leeuw's 1998 version, with the Schönberg Ensemble, pulls in two directions at once. German actress **Barbara Sukowa**, renowned for her work with cult director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, evokes the right sound for *Sprechstimme* but diverts alarmingly from the straight and narrow as she supplements Schoenberg's written line with falsettos and stage laughs. "Gebet an Pierrot" is delivered more like a dramatic monologue but her nose for undiluted drama is undeniably involving. The crystalline textures at the end of "Heimweh" are beautifully realised, but there's a general mismatch between the undemonstrative surface of de Leeuw's direction and Sukowa's thespian swagger.

Peter Eötvös and **Phyllis Bryn-Julson** accompanied, in 1991, by the Ensemble Modern give a solid performance, but one that never properly fulfils its potential. In the first piece of Part 2, "Nacht", where Boulez enters hell, Eötvös – despite an initial feel of ominous menace – merely sounds like a man whose luggage has been put on the wrong plane. Which is not to say he lacks dash elsewhere: "Der Dandy" is animated, like cartoon music, and Bryn-Julson's *Sprechstimme* is sure of pitch, but the synergy between Eötvös and Bryn-Julson is ultimately underwhelming.

Hans Zender's own music confronts received opinions about tradition, an approach that filters into his *Pierrot*. His narrator, **Salome Kammer**, describes how her view of *Sprechstimme* was formed by research into turn-of-the-century opera and cabaret recordings, which revealed an "over-expressive" and "highly strung, often hysterical range," she says. But this learning doesn't licence a free-for-all: instead she treads a disciplined line between actorly inflections and faith to Schoenberg's intentions. Her *glissandi* are highly cultivated and she projects with a broad dynamic range: the climactic



Christine Schäfer:
touching on perfection

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY



DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1940 Stiedry-Wagner; ens / Schoenberg	Sony (M) MPK45695 (9/74 ⁸ – nla)
1957 Héricard; SWR SO ens / Rosbaud	Wergo (P) WER6403-2
1961 Pilarczyk; Domaine Musical Ens / Boulez	Accord (B) 476 8862 (9/06)
1961 Steingruber; ens / Golschmann	Vanguard (P) SVC145
1967 Manning; Vesuvius Ens	Regis (S) FRC9106
1973 M Thomas; London Sinf / Atherton	Decca (M) 425 626-2DM (7/90)
1977 Minton; Barenboim & ens / Boulez	Sony (M) SMK48466 (12/93)
1977 Manning; Nash Ens / Rattle	Chandos (M) CHAN6534
1987 Sziklay; Budapest CO ens / Mihály	Hungaroton (P) HCD11385 (10/87)
1990 Shelton; Da Capo Chbr Plyrs	Bridge (P) BCD9032
1991 Bryn-Julson; Ens Modern / Eötvös	RCA (P) 09026 61179-2
1991 Pousseur; Musique Oblique Ens / Herreweghe	Harmonia Mundi (S) HMA195 1390 (8/92 ⁸)
1994 Kammer; Avantgarde Ens / Zender	MDG (P) MDG613 0579-2
1997 Schäfer; Ens Intercontemporain / Boulez	DG (P) 457 630-2GH (10/98)
1997 Silja; Twentieth Century Classics Ens / Craft	Koch (P) 37471-2 (11/00); Naxos (S) 8 557523 (5/07)
1998 Sukowa; Schönberg Ens / de Leeuw	Koch (P) 310117
1999 Andersson; Ma Ens	Nytorp (P) NYTORP0001
1999 Castellani; Staatskapelle Dresden / Sinopoli	Elatus (M) 0927 49017-2
2003 Janssen; Het Collectief / Engelen	Fuga Libera (P) FUG504 (11/05)
2006 Goltz; Inauthentica	MSR Classics (P) MS1208
2006 Doufexis; Opus 21 Musikplus Ens / Gourzi	Neos (P) NEOS10709

octave-and-a-half *glissandi* at 0'49" in "Enthauptung" is rendered as a rasping, blood-curdling shriek, but in "Der kranke Mond" she demonstrates subtler pitching of falsetto high notes. Zender responds with fidgety, anti-gloss ensemble playing: the grungy "Enthauptung" is motored forwards by Steffen Schleiermacher's relentlessly bangy piano, and Pierrot wanders shell-shocked around Zender's artfully shaped tonality-busting resolutions in the final number.

Marianne Pousseur gets filed here under a technicality. Her father was the composer Henri Pousseur, and the eye-popping presence of early music specialist **Philippe Herreweghe** as conductor of her 1991 version might, on the surface, seem like a USP. However, Herreweghe's accompaniment is shapeless and Pousseur's needlessly acerbic tone poleaxes the expressive capacity of Schoenberg's lines and takes her out of front-line consideration. **Giuseppe Sinopoli**'s 1999 performance is, typically, the love-it-or-hate-it marmite option. Sinopoli oozes heartfelt Romanticism wherever

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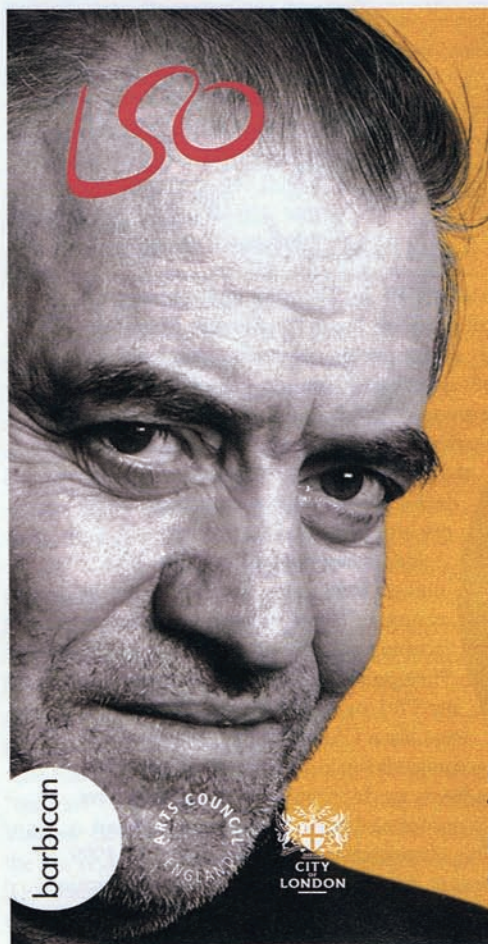


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he can: the violin melodies that accompany the narrator in "Colombine" sound positively Bergian, likewise the cello-centric "Gemeinheit!" and "Serenade" numbers in Part 3. Oddly, therefore, Luisa Castellani's *Sprechstimme* is a cold fish and, anyway, she is too often buried inside a garishly balanced mix.

FROM EAST TO WEST

To Hungary first, and an out-of-the-way but revelatory 1987 view from **Erika Sziklay**, conductor **András Mihály** and members of the Budapest Chamber Orchestra. Mihály makes the ensemble sing and chatter like a personality-plus folk band. "Madonna" is daringly brisk and Sziklay takes full advantage of Schoenberg's fastidiously marked dynamics (briefly down to *ppp*) as her fulsome *glissandi* intrepidly follow his melodic contours. Sziklay's earnest expressivity and the clarion bark of her East European accent make this a unique-sounding *Pierrot*.

Lucy Shelton's recording with the Da Capo Chamber Players is the only one that includes an alternate English rendering alongside the original German, and they chance it without a conductor. It has

to be said: *Sprechstimme* and the Queen's English is an unholy alliance, but for non-German-speakers Shelton establishes how effectively Schoenberg colours the in-the-moment nuances of Giraud's poetry. Her *Sprechstimme* in the German version is precisely pitched and imaginatively word-painted, and the Da Capo Chamber Players

Schoenberg's own recording is essential for gauging how a performance practice has evolved

excel: the counterpoint between voice and piccolo in No 3 is shriller than shrill.

As ever, **Robert Craft** polarises opinion, and his 1999 version with German singer **Anja Silja** has its passionate advocates and determined knockers. In the context of every other available recording, I hear an immaculately prepared performance and the Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble do not compromise Schoenberg's intricate demands. Silja has a range that is secure throughout the registral spectrum but her *Sprechstimme* too easily morphs towards singing, and *Pierrot* arrives home at the end of his journey sounding pretty much as he did at the start – surely more characterisation is required? American singer **Jennifer Goltz** and the (unconducted) Ensemble Inauthentica's 2006 version is nearly good. The instrumental playing is winningly uninhibited and Goltz performs with rhythmic urgency: but her absurdly exaggerated and wildly inaccurate *Sprechstimme* doesn't cut the mustard in such a strong field.

RECENT VIEWS AND THE ULTIMATE PIERROT

And the real surprise of preparing this article has been discovering just how strong that field is, presumably reflecting the truism that only a fool would approach *Pierrot lunaire* half-heartedly. The *Pierrot* of *Pierrots* is Boulez's 1997 version with Christine Schäfer, a predictable choice admittedly, but Boulez's instinct for how the twisted, dark psychology of *Pierrot* can be realised in sound is unrivalled. Schoenberg's own recording is essential for gauging how a performance practice has evolved – of the rest, Jane Manning with Simon Rattle is an excellent budget option; otherwise Erika Sziklay and András Mihály's unique approach, and Hans Zender and Salome Kammer's gently revisionist view, stand out.



Anja Silja: has her passionate advocates

Listening to the three most recent versions changes nothing. **Ing-Britt Ibbá Andersson's** sanitised account with the Swedish ensemble *Ma* in 1999 is the most brazenly sung *Pierrot* since Yvonne Minton. Het Collectief under **Robin Engelen** overwhelm **Jacqueline Janssen's** black-and-white *Pierrot*, while **Stella Doufexis** and the *Opus 21 Musikplus Ensemble* under **Konstantia Gourzi** grasp defeat from the jaws of victory. Issued with the tagline "*Pierrot lunaire* plus jazz", jazz pianist Maria Baptist inserts "jazz" interludes between the three parts. Her technique of locking key motifs into deadening, Keith Jarrett-like vamps is a woeful response to this liberated, open-ended music. Free improvisers? Sounds like one for you. ☉

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THE BUDGET ALTERNATIVE

Jane Manning; Nash Ensemble / **Simon Rattle**
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Jane Manning's extraordinary empathy for *Sprechstimme* is allied to Simon Rattle's subtle and detailed realisation of Schoenberg's ensemble-writing.



THE TOP CHOICE

Christine Schäfer; Ensemble
Intercontemporain / **Pierre Boulez**
DG Ⓢ 457 630-2GH

Third time lucky – Pierre Boulez's third recording of *Pierrot lunaire* probes into its dark psychology, and Christine Schäfer's *Sprechstimme* is idiomatic, accurate and boldly imaginative.



NEW RELEASES

www.hyperion-records.co.uk

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Recorded and released in the 'anniversary year' of both Handel and Haydn, Hyperion's Record of the Month is an effusive celebration of the two composers, performed by an artist whose renditions of 17th- and 18th-century keyboard works on the piano have received the highest possible acclaim. Hewitt's trademark clarity of line, singing tone and instinctive musicality are perfectly suited to the urbane elegance of the works recorded here.

ANGELA HEWITT

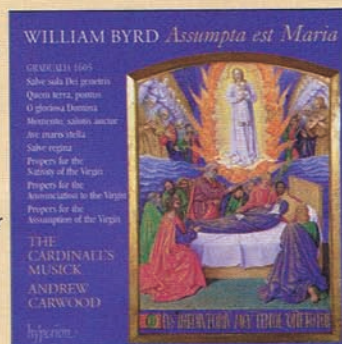


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BYRD ASSUMPTA EST MARIA

In this twelfth volume from The Cardinal's Musick's acclaimed Byrd series, the composer's overtly Catholic agenda is clearly displayed. All of the music on this disc is drawn from the first volume of *Gradualia* published in 1605. The music is a world away from the dark broodings of the earlier *Cantiones Sacrae*. In the later publications Byrd achieves a fusion of styles, mixing the energy and rhythmic vitality of the madrigal tradition with the spirituality and liturgical context of words from the Mass and Divine Office.

THE CARDINAL'S MUSICK
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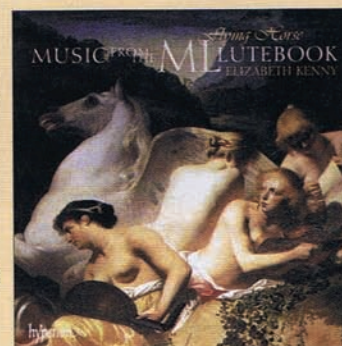
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FLYING HORSE

MUSIC FROM THE ML LUTEBOOK

Mysterious doodles on a 17th-century manuscript provided Elizabeth Kenny with the inspiration for this fascinating disc. Works by Dowland, Johnson, Bachelier, Sturt and others summon up an exhilarating musical world influenced by the court, the theatre and the cries of the street. Kenny, arguably the greatest lutenist of today, performs this entrancing collection with an aplomb and flair that seem to directly channel the virtuoso performers who were handed the music with the ink still wet on the page.

ELIZABETH KENNY

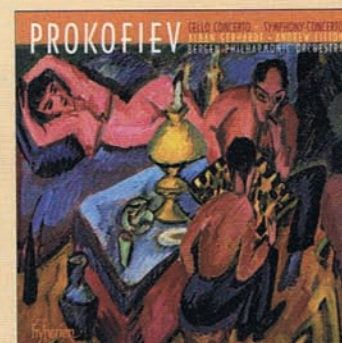


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The two works recorded here have an interestingly close musical relationship. The Symphony-Concerto is now acknowledged as one of the composer's late masterpieces. It has been recorded here with its extremely different first version, Cello Concerto No 1, a work of undeniable importance to scholars and music-lovers alike. The German virtuoso Alban Gerhardt performs with Andrew Litton and the Bergen Symphony Orchestra in their second disc for Hyperion.

ALBAN GERHARDT / BERGEN
PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
ANDREW LITTON



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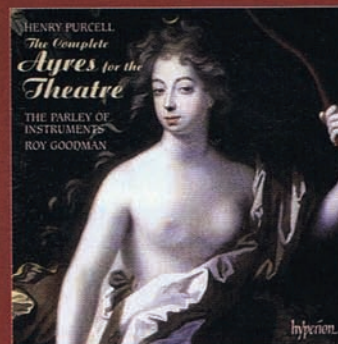
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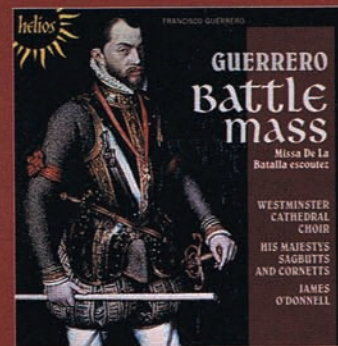
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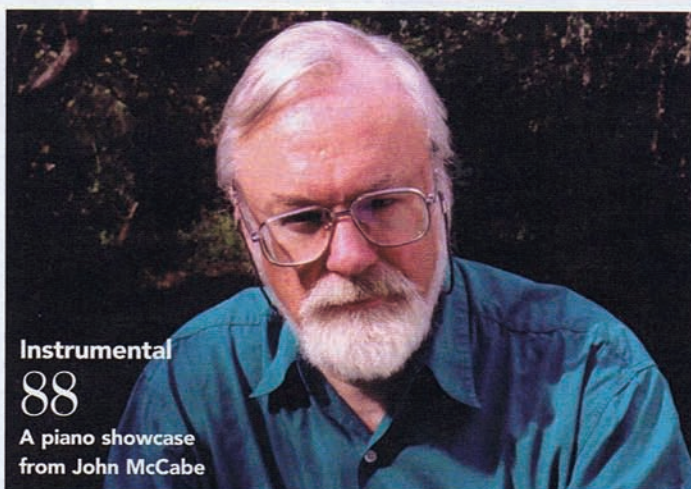


Orchestral
64 Infectious Weber works
from Fabio di Cäsola

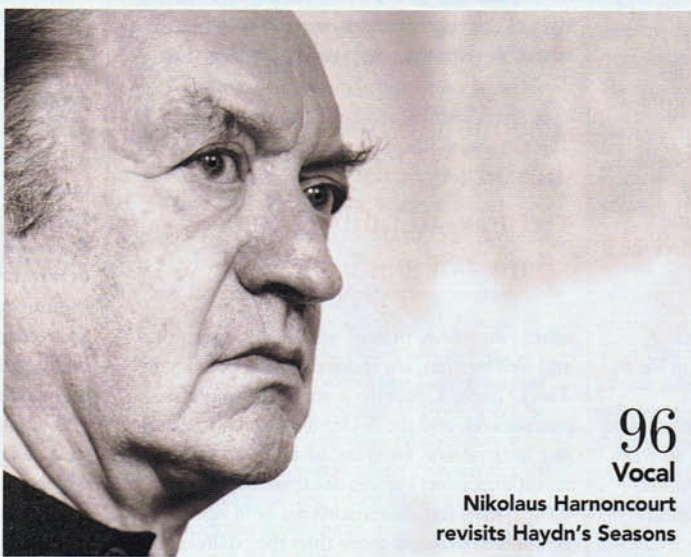
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77 Joshua Bell records the
Da Vinci sequel's score



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78 Saint-Saëns, from the
Mozart Piano Quartet



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88
A piano showcase
from John McCabe



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Editor's Choice
See page 10 and this
month's cover disc

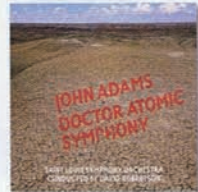
Orchestral

Kavakos plays Mendelssohn • Weber's infectious clarinet concertos

Adams

Doctor Atomic Symphony. Guide to Strange Places
St Louis Symphony Orchestra / David Robertson
Nonesuch © 7559 79932-8 (47' • DDD)

**Is this 'Guide to Strange Places'
from St Louis quite strange enough?**



Guide to Strange Places is a great title that's been waiting for a piece.

Whether John Adams's 2001 Technicolor 20-minute orchestral showcase fully has the

courage of its convictions – what are these “strange places”? It might be nice if they were even stranger, and why would we need a guide to them anyway? – is a moot point.

Adams describes his piece as a “descent into an imagined, unexpected underworld”, citing the fantastical 19th-century sound worlds of Mussorgsky, Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

**‘The g-force of woodwind
caterwauls and bruising
percussion inserts
snap the structure’**

and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* as points of departure. He also references Ligeti and Birtwistle who are most audible during the surprisingly hardcore conclusion, as the g-force of woodwind caterwauls and bruising percussion inserts snap the structure. David Robertson and his athletically shrill St Louis Symphony Orchestra enjoy ramming that point home. Adams being Adams, of course, he prepares the ground thoroughly to avoid frightening any horses. Only niggling tuba, later bass drum, thuds suggest that the characteristic looping string arpeggios at the outset might be up for a rougher ride than usual.

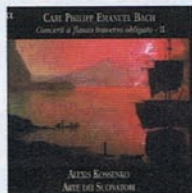
What does it add up to? File under “enjoyable escapism”. Unlike the natural charm of, say, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Adams needs to turn his charm on. A jazzy, wolf-whistling riff appears from nowhere that sounds like pure Bernstein – and a contrived sprinkling of Disney-like tinsel before the hard-hitting end-point. The *Doctor Atomic Symphony*, drawn from his recent opera, is, frankly, the weakest Adams I've ever heard. Overbearing rhetoric, vapid gestures, oven-ready orchestration. Enough said.

Philip Clark

CPE Bach

Flute Concertos –
H416 Wq13; H431 Wq166; H438 Wq168
Arte dei Suonatori / Alexis Kossenko fl
Alpha © ALPHA146 (64' • DDD)

**A stunning showcase for the flute
but a composer on uneven form**



CPE Bach's flute concertos were written for his royal patron, Frederick the Great, to whose daily concerts the composer was chained for years. An accomplished soloist, the king preferred the more emollient style of his other court composers, notably the flute virtuoso Quantz. Heard at its best, as in the opening A minor Concerto, it's easy to understand why CPE Bach's music was unappreciated: its surface is bewilderingly mercurial yet carefully thought out, its almost constant surprises engaging many different levels in rapid succession, scoring, register, and gestural contrasts. The monarch would anyway have had to be quite a virtuoso to pull off the strings of semiquavers of the opening movement: Alexis Kossenko forces admiration here, and in the slow movement his breath control and finesse in ornamentation are equally impressive. It's in the latter feature that the true style of this music resides, and the entire ensemble does the composer full justice. The

**‘The monarch would
have had to be quite a
virtuoso to pull off the
strings of semiquavers’**

other two works, though undeniably charming and well written, are marginally less convincing. The D major Concerto seems lightweight in comparison, and the A major (which also exists in a later version for cello, of which several good recordings exist) betrays the tendency in CPE Bach's fast movements for bold opening gestures to promise more than they deliver. But these shortcomings (as I perceive them) are amply redeemed in the slow movements, in which CPE Bach's qualities shine through: whether you already know his music or are waiting to be introduced to it, these zestful performances are highly recommended.

Fabrice Fitch

Beethoven

Symphony No 9, 'Choral', Op 125.
Die Weihe des Hauses, Op 124 – Overture.
Gratulations-Menuett, WoO3

*Inger Dam-Jensen sop *Lilli Paasikivi mez
*Lars Cleveman ten *Karl-Magnus Fredriksson bar
Danish Radio *Vocal Ensemble and *Chorus;
Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Thomas Dausgaard
Simax © PSC1283 (77' • DDD)

**This is Beethoven cleansed – it's worth
a listen but it's not quite gritty enough**



Simax's valuable complete-Beethoven-orchestral-works set amounts to a Beethoven refresher course, which means the fruits of modern scholarship

gainfully employed (Jonathan Del Mar being the pivotal scholar), the eradication of interpretative “bad habits” and a farewell to the image of Beethoven as a scowling Teutonic heavyweight. In that respect alone Dausgaard's *Choral Symphony* is PC almost to a fault: it's a swift, unmannered, clear-textured presentation in which the recorded balance reveals all, the playing style eschews old-world vibrato and, come the closing *Presto*, the release of tension seems to justify all that has gone before. There's no sentimentality but there is beauty, certainly among dialoguing string lines en route to the climactic statement of the “Ode to Joy” theme. In the first movement I'd have welcomed stronger projection from the strings and a more cataclysmic central climax, but what you do have is a clarification of formal, or structural, logic, rather like being able to see an argument from all sides. So often with this work we're given a partial viewpoint, though Claudio Abbado in Berlin (DG, 11/08) manages objectivity without us noticing. With Dausgaard I'm too often aware that the chosen style is “how they do Beethoven these days”, whereas with Abbado all that matters is the music.

The singers are first-rate and the fillers work well. It's good to have the *Gratulations-Menuett*, which, as George Hall tells us in his excellent booklet-notes, was originally written for the projected Tenth Symphony. The *Consecration of the House* Overture has plenty of Handelian gaiety but no real grit. And that's what I miss most in these performances, especially the symphony. They're Beethoven after an effective counselling session: lively, with plenty to say – but “adjusted”.

Rob Cowan

Benedict • Macfarren**Benedict** Piano Concertos – Op 45; Op 89**Macfarren** Concertstück

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra /

Howard Shelley *pf*

Hyperion © CDA67720 (71' • DDD)

Howard Shelley's playing is light-footed on the road less travelled

Sir Julius Benedict (German-born, he was knighted in 1871) was central to musical life in Victorian England. His opera *The Lily of Kilarny* (1865) was revived well into

the 20th century but I doubt if one in ten thousand has ever heard a note of his piano music until now, making this release *ipso facto* an enticing prospect.

Benedict (1804–85) had been a pupil of Hummel and Weber, and if you accept that he was unable or unwilling to advance much on their piano style (the concertos were written in 1850 and 1837 respectively) you will have a lively and entertaining time with him. Whether or not it was worth the immense amount of time and effort in resurrecting these scores is a moot point – especially as no concert promoter is likely to ask Howard Shelley or anyone else to programme them: a pity, because the earlier of the two (though assigned a later opus number) is particularly effective with attractive themes and ideas. Shelley spends much of his time at the top end of the keyboard delivering cascades of filigree passagework with an apparently effortless fluency. How he manages to lead such crisp, light-footed (though admittedly incidental) accompaniment simultaneously is quite miraculous. Few other musicians alive combine the two roles so effectively. Walter Macfarren (1826–1905), brother of the more famous Sir George, just about merits the inclusion of his Mendelssohnian *Concertstück* (it improves once it gets under way). Don't miss the opportunity of acquiring it. We shall not pass this way again.

Jeremy Nicholas

Effinger • M Gould • R Harris • D Moore**Effinger** Little Symphony No 1**M Gould** Cowboy Rhapsody**R Harris** Symphony No 11**D Moore** Symphony No 2

Sinfonia Varsovia / Ian Hobson

Albany © TROY1042 (69' • DDD)

Three world premiere recordings on a splendidly entertaining disc

This is an important release due to the first appearance on record of the 11th of Roy Harris's 13 symphonies. Harris was once the most prominent American symphonist but his star dwindled in the avant-garde-minded 1960s, when this work – and Nos 8, 9 and 10 – was premiered. Although the brilliant Third ▶

EDITOR'S CHOICE

A feast of fine viola-playing and a stunning Schnittke that steals the show

Beamish • Britten • Walton**Beamish** Viola Concerto No 1 **Britten** Lachrymae,Op 48a **Walton** Viola ConcertoTatjana Masurenko *via* North German Radio

Philharmonic Orchestra / Garry Walker

Coviello © COV30507 (59' • DDD)

Elgar • Schnittke**Elgar** Cello Concerto, Op 85

(arr Tertis/Carpenter)

Schnittke Viola ConcertoDavid Aaron Carpenter *via*

Philharmonia Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach

Ondine © ODE1153-2 (65' • DDD)

Walton – selected comparison:

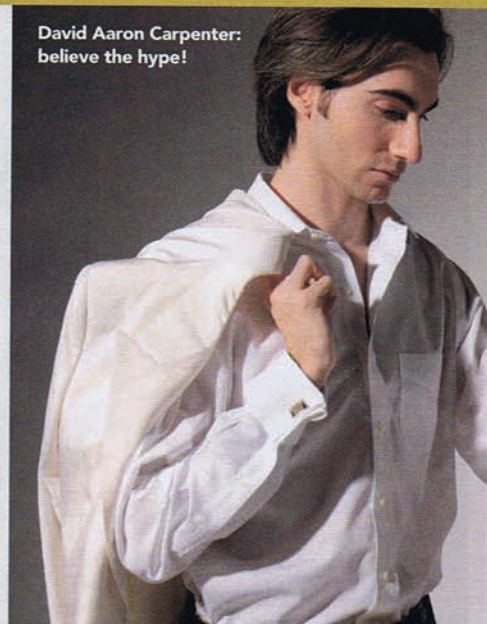
Kennedy, RPO, Previn (1/88*) (EMI) 562813-2



A product of the St Petersburg State Conservatory and later pupil of Kim Kashkashian and Nobuko Imai, Tatjana Masurenko is currently professor of viola at the Mendelssohn Hochschule für Musik in Leipzig. Her reading of Walton's masterpiece combines impressive technical acumen and no mean interpretative flair. The NDR Radiophilharmonie, too, respond with polish and keen vigour for Edinburgh-born Garry Walker: that he is a conductor with a bright future ahead of him is amply confirmed by his superbly alert and thrustful handling of the finale's riveting apex. All I miss, I suppose, is the last ounce of rapt identification with this deeply personal statement that draws me back time and again to Nigel Kennedy's magnificently eloquent 1987 recording. For me, this remains one of Kennedy's finest achievements in the studio, and its supremacy is not challenged by this eminently stylish version from Hanover. Still, with powerfully involving renderings of Britten's wondrous *Lachrymae* and Sally Beamish's First Concerto of 1995 (a deftly scored, single-movement essay of uncommon resourcefulness and communicative warmth), the disc makes an appealing proposition for anyone who fancies the programme. Undistractingly natural sound and balance, too.

The advance buzz surrounding David Aaron Carpenter proves justified. This is the first of four CDs the 23-year-old American (a prize-winning protégé of Pinchas Zukerman) will be making for Ondine. In a recent interview, Carpenter spoke of

David Aaron Carpenter:
believe the hype!



his desire "to put [the viola] out as a major solo instrument to rival the violin and cello", an aim which, as Michael Kennedy suggested in his perceptive review of Rivka Golani's 1988 world premiere recording (Conifer, 4/89 – nla), chimes with that of Lionel Tertis when he fashioned his transcription of Elgar's Cello Concerto in 1929. Tertis's clever makeover has now, in turn, been overhauled by Carpenter, yet the finished article still runs the risk of pointing up the music's exquisite, truly classical economy, deftness and poise at the expense of its aching intimacy, nostalgic glow and irresistible physicality. Nor will everyone warm to the enforced changes of register within Elgar's seamlessly conceived solo part. Carpenter gives a commandingly articulate display, and the Philharmonia are on immaculately scrubbed form under Christoph Eschenbach's thoughtful lead. Mind you, Golani has the advantage of support from the incomparable Vernon Handley (what a great Elgarian he was!), not to mention a kinder acoustic (this newcomer does sound a tad clinical).

Carpenter's choice of the powerful Schnittke Concerto calls to mind Pieter Wispelwey's adventurous pairing of the Elgar and Lutosławski concertos (Channel Classics, 7/99). Written for Yuri Bashmet in 1985, it is an excitingly intrepid and deeply sincere creation, as provocative in its wild extremes of mood as it is intriguing in its fruitful juxtaposition of old and new. However, such is the work's emotional clout and cumulative impact, I can guarantee you'll keep coming back for more. It helps, too, that Carpenter plays with superlative assurance and magnetic conviction, and he is backed to the hilt by Eschenbach and an audibly fired-up Philharmonia. Ondine's dryish sound and somewhat analytical balance suit Schnittke better than Elgar. All told, an impressive and bold debut. **Andrew Achenbach**



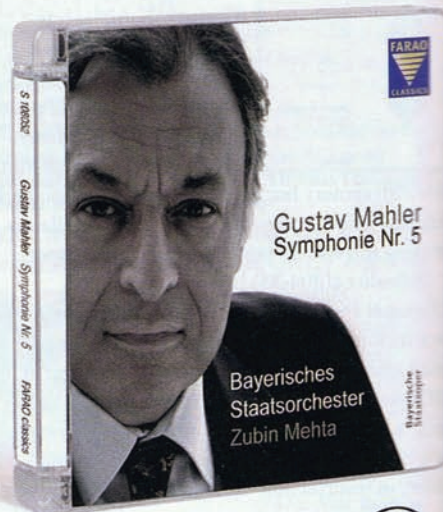
Gustav Mahler Symphony No. 5

Bavarian State Orchestra
Zubin Mehta

Zubin Mehta was Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera from 1998 until 2006. He regularly returns to the conductor's podium of the Bavarian State Orchestra. This new release on SACD hybrid was recorded live in December 2008. It illustrates the outstanding class and unique tonal tradition of 'his' orchestra. A truly great musical performance!

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Symphony has unfairly eclipsed the rest of his all-too-variable output, the postmodern 21st century may see a more balanced re-evaluation, especially of the later works.

The 11th Symphony (1967) was written for the NYPO's 125th anniversary and was premiered to lukewarm appreciation in 1968 under the composer's direction. Like the Third and Seventh, No 11 is in a single dramatic movement and is scarcely less compelling a structure than its better-known predecessors. Opening with an uneasy piano solo, the work builds via an inverted arch to a subtly impressive edifice, inspired allegedly by the social upheavals in America at the time. The familiar Harris fingerprints are here, but there is something of the lighter, pastoral manner of Nos 8 and 9, without their tendency to the diffuse. Ian Hobson draws a fine account from Penderecki's Sinfonia Varsovia.

Their performances of the companion works are no less impressive. Dating from the close of the Second World War, these pieces show the diversity and quiet dynamism of American composition in 1945. True, Gould's *Cowboy Rhapsody* (1940-43) is perhaps a touch overlong, but it's great fun. Likewise the Little Symphony No 1 (1945) of Colorado-born Cecil Effinger (1914-90), which is a real minor gem. Of more moment is Douglas Moore's Second Symphony (also 1945), although like Effinger's it makes a virtue of the classical four-movement plan and tonal ethos. In other company, the Moore would be the major utterance here, but the Harris is a bit special. This is recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Elgar

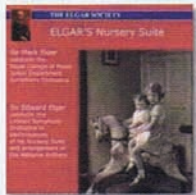
Anonymous The British National Anthem (arr Elgar)^a
Elgar Nursery Suite^{a/b}

^aLondon Symphony Orchestra / Edward Elgar;

^bRoyal College of Music Junior Department
Symphony Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder

Elgar Editions © EEC0008 (43' • ADD^bDDD)

A tale of two nurseries – a charming memento of a memorable undertaking



By happy coincidence, Her Majesty the Queen shares the year of her birth (1926) with the Junior Department of London's Royal College of Music. This recording

of Elgar's *Nursery Suite* of 1930 (dedicated to the then Duchess of York and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret) was set down at Henry Wood Hall three years ago to celebrate the Queen's 80th birthday and was only ever issued privately. Now rescued for wider dissemination by the Elgar Society, it finds Mark Elder drawing playing of remarkable accomplishment from the Junior Department Symphony

Orchestra, whose members, many of whom will surely go on to pursue professional careers, are aged between 13 and 18.

The performance itself has a most agreeable unfussiness and disarming enthusiasm, though, inevitably, there isn't quite the characterful profile one encounters on, say, Boult's cherishable and wonderfully wise 1955 HMV recording (Testament, 8/97) or Bryden Thomson's altogether more leisurely yet glowingly affectionate 1982 account with the Ulster Orchestra (now on mid-price Chandos Classics, 10/84^R, coupled with *The Wand of Youth* and one of the finest discs from his Belfast tenure). Still, it remains a very happy memento of what was evidently a memorable undertaking for all involved, and the Elgar Society have chosen to couple it with the composer's twinklingly fresh 1931 version, which brings a most touching contribution from his dear friend WH ("Billy") Reed in the coda ("Envoy"). Elgar's February 1928 rendering of his own arrangement of the National Anthem makes a rousing postscript. The extremely well made transfers sound identical to those originally effected by Anthony C Griffith and subsequently contained in Volume 2 of EMI Classics' Elgar Edition (2/93 – nla). **Andrew Achenbach**

Fasch

Trumpet Concerto FWV L:D1^a. Violin Concerto, FWV L:D4^{a/b}. Overtures – FWV K:D3; FWV K:G3
^aGiuliano Sommerhalder *trpt*

Basle Chamber Orchestra / Julia Schröder ^{b/vn}
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88697 44641-2
(62' • DDD)

Variety abounds, despite the predominance of a certain major key



Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688-1758) trained at the Thomasschule in Leipzig under Kuhnau, spent most of his career working as Kapellmeister in Zerbst (about halfway between

Magdeburg and Wittenberg), and was a friend of Telemann's. None of his music was published during his own lifetime, although manuscript copies were admired and owned by Bach. The growing revival of interest in Fasch's accomplished music has produced some enjoyable recordings, as has been noted recently in these pages regarding a spellbinding disc by Zefiro (6/09). On paper, the Basle Chamber Orchestra's programme of four substantial works (two concertos and two overtures) might seem a bit over-reliant on D major (only one work is in the different key of G minor), but these are enjoyable performances that convey a fine variety of charming sonorities and imaginative ideas. The six-movement suite ("Overture") in D, written c1740 for the virtuoso court orchestra at Dresden, features plenty of radiant passages for three oboes, two trumpets and bassoon.

The Basle players perform with remarkable dexterity and finesse, and soloist Giuliano Sommerhalder's playing of the most fiendish high passages of the Trumpet Concerto (c1750) is thrillingly supple and fluent. The Overture (suite) in G minor presents a more sombre and learned aspect of Fasch's writing, and features telling four-part woodwind passages from two oboists and two bassoonists. Violinist Julia Schröder provides sparkling solo playing in a richly orchestrated concerto written for the celebrated Dresden virtuoso Pisendel and directs elegant performances that amply convey dance-like gestures. **David Vickers**

Fauré

Ballade, Op 19^d. Berceuse, Op 16^b. Elégie, Op 24^c. Fantaisie, Op 79^a. Fantaisie, Op 111^d. Romance^e. Violin Concerto, Op 14^b.

^aJuliette Hurel *fl* ^bJean-Marc Phillips-Varjabédian *vn* ^cHenri Demarquette *vc* ^dJérôme Ducros *pf*
Orchestre de Bretagne / Moshe Atzmon
Timpani © 1C1172 (64' • DDD)

A finely performed and recorded 'concerto' disc for all Fauré lovers



This fascinating disc gathers together for the first time all of Fauré's *concertante* works; a record of concertos, if you like, as Hanna Krooz puts it in her enthusiastic booklet-

notes. First comes the Ballade in its piano-and-orchestra arrangement (rather than the original ornate solo version, which even bemused Liszt), played by Jérôme Ducros, whose full-blooded Romanticism would have appealed to a composer who dreaded his music being played "as if the shutters were down". Here Fauré's

'The Berceuse, with its comic reminder of the Eton Boating Song, is excellently played'

idealised birdsong and prismatic unfolding of ideas are presented with a boldness that is the reverse of, say, Robert Casadesus's more traditional classic French literalism. The much later Op 111 Fantaisie, too, is given with a scintillating regard for its ceaseless flow of ideas and an exhilarating sense of how the bleakness so characteristic of Fauré's final years ends in a dazzling exultancy.

Elsewhere the Berceuse, with its comic reminder of the "Eton Boating Song" (albeit in a magically sophisticated form), is excellently played, as is the famous *Elégie* – even if both are preferable in their violin-and-piano and cello-and-piano versions respectively (never more so than in Charlin's early recordings with Germaine Thyssens-Valentin as the pianist).

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Richard Egarr:
full marks

A unique and handsome handling with a bountiful booklet to boot



Handel

Organ Concertos, Op 7^a. Concerto in F major HWV295. Chaconne, HWV442^b. Chaconne, HWV485^b. Fugue, HWV264^b

^aAcademy of Ancient Music /

Richard Egarr ^aorg^bhpd

Harmonia Mundi (F) ② HMC80 7447 (128' • DDD)

In this anniversary year it's appropriate to welcome a new recording of Handel's Op 7 Organ Concertos. Richard Egarr and the Academy of Ancient Music have prepared their own performing edition, which has involved spontaneously creating *ad libitum* passages, or choosing other bits of Handel for the slow movements. The rich-sounding AAM forces comprise 18 players, including oboes and bassoons; both their playing and Egarr's solo contributions are of an impeccably high order.

Taking his cue from Charles Burney's eyewitness accounts of Handel's own performances, Egarr takes a bold, improvisatory approach to the concertos. The *allegro* movements are enlivened by rapid keyboard flourishes, liberal ornamentation (especially during repeats of whole sections) and delightful variants to the basic printed rhythms in the manner of French Baroque composers. Particularly startling is the opening bitonal chord cluster of the A major Concerto, Op 7 No 2; Egarr acknowledges his debt to the 17th/18th-century writer Roger North for this daring harmonic gesture. On a lighter note, listeners will

enjoy all the cuckoo calls plus other birdsong motifs that crop up during the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* Concerto in F.

Throughout the two CDs, tempi are beautifully judged, with a degree of flexibility and an avoidance of excessive speeds in the fast movements. In the three works for solo harpsichord, Egarr's calm, measured pacing allows Handel's music to flow clearly and effortlessly. The opportunity to hear the splendid Chaconne in G major, HWV442, is highly rewarding; and, as Egarr points out, it uses the same bass-line and harmonic progression as the first eight bars of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

Egarr's programme-notes and a lovely collection of paintings featuring 18th-century London make for a booklet whose excellence matches that of the distinguished music-making.

'Egarr's calm, measured pacing allows Handel's music to flow clearly and effortlessly'

The recording is highly detailed – possibly a bit too close-up for some listeners. Full marks to Egarr for his choice of the 1998 Handel House Museum organ for the concertos; this modern British instrument is a copy of the type of chamber organ known to Handel. This is a superb set from all concerned, and a valuable addition to the Handel discography. **Christopher Nickol**

The Op 79 Fantaisie for flute and orchestra was a virtuoso test-piece written for the Paris Conservatoire, and the one remaining movement of the Violin Concerto is an interesting failure. Here Fauré reminds you that the idea of a concerto, with its element of display, was foreign to his ardent but fastidious nature. But all these works are finely performed and recorded, making this an indispensable acquisition for all lovers of a still gravely misunderstood composer. **Bryce Morrison**

Hardy

Blue Letters from Tanganyika
BBC National Orchestra of Wales /
Grant Llewellyn

Ffin Records © FFN016 (18' • DDD). Available as a download from www.FfinRecords.co.uk

A kind of symphonic poem, inspired by descriptions of the African landscape



Although primarily associated with music for film and television, John Hardy has produced a significant number of orchestral, instrumental and stage works, including

– since moving to Wales in the 1980s – two successful chamber operas for Music Theatre Wales. A BBC National Orchestra of Wales commission, *Blue Letters from Tanganyika*, composed in 1997, is a symphonic poem of

'Hardy projects descriptions of the African landscape contained in his mother's letters on to a sonic soundscape'

sorts. Its four movements are based on letters written by Hardy's mother in the 1950s, when she spent time working with missionary schools in Tanzania.

This may not be film music but the visual impact is still prominent because Hardy projects descriptions of the African landscape contained in his mother's letters onto a sonic soundscape. He portrays these images very effectively on the whole. The rhythmically charged, open and immediately engaging music is bright and colourful while still managing to evoke the African landscape through subtle use of pentatonic patterns and interlocking rhythms.

Indeed, freed from the visual straitjacket of film, Hardy appears to revel in the opportunity to give full reign to his musical persona, employing a large orchestra with insouciance throughout many sections of the work. Although such moments of textural density and activity become oversaturated at times (not helped, it has to be said, by an over-dynamic live recording), the serene, static and most obviously filmic third movement, "Twilight on the Lake", provides effective contrast and relief, evoking as it does

"the little noises of the lake, the trees, and all the thousands of little creatures". **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Haydn

'Music for Prince Esterházy and the King of Naples' Scherzandi, HobII/33-38. Concerti per la lira organizzata, HobVIIb/1-5. Notturmi, HobII/25-32. Baryton Octets, HobX/1-6. Divertimento, HobX/10 Haydn Sinfonietta, Vienna / Manfred Huss BIS © BIS-CD1796/8 (5h 32' • DDD)

These quirky contributions to the Haydn celebrations are sparkingly played



Haydn's patrons certainly had their idiosyncratic tastes in instruments. In the 1760s and early 1770s the composer turned out reams of works to gratify Prince Nicolaus

Esterházy's passion for the baryton, a bass viol with additional harp-like metal strings that vibrated in sympathy with the bowed strings. Over a decade later came a lucrative commission from King Ferdinand IV of Naples for concertos for the lira organizzata (a hurdy-gurdy with an inbuilt miniature organ, which soon became obsolete). These mini-chamber concertos – which the king played with his lira tutor – went down so well that another commission quickly followed for a set of notturmi. Modern performances replace the two lire with flute and oboe (occasionally two flutes), as Haydn did when he performed the concertos and Notturmi in London. This is charming, easy-going music, yet the Notturmi (especially) are full of exquisite touches of part-writing and chromatic harmony, with the woodwind complement (flute, oboe, clarinets and horns) discoursing in kaleidoscopically varied textures.

Manfred Huss and his expert period-instrument ensemble can be brisk and unyielding in some of the slow movements – say, the siciliano *Andantes* in lira concertos Nos 1 and 5. But the faster movements combine rhythmic verve, carefully judged instrumental balance and an infectious sense of enjoyment. Highlights include the gleeful, racy finales of Notturmi Nos 1, 3 and 4, full of quickfire repartee, deftly dispatched.

The baryton is represented here by a divertimento and the seven octets of 1775, in which the instrument adds its distinctive dusky, buzzy resonance to an ensemble of strings and horns. *Allegros* are cheerful and compact, enlivened by some spectacular horn antics at both extremes of their compass. Most memorable, though, are the eloquent, often surprisingly intense *Adagios*. Again the playing is crisp and spirited, with the superb horn-players not afraid to bray incontinently in movements such as the variation finale of No 2 and the opening *Allegro* of No 5.

The earliest music on these discs is the set of six so-called (not by the composer) Scherzandi, composed shortly after Haydn's Esterházy

appointment in 1761. These are frolicsome miniature four-movement symphonies, with a lilting flute solo (delightfully played by Reinhard Czasch) in the Trio of each of the Minuets. Huss can, again, short-change the delicacy of the slow movements, though elsewhere the performances bring out all the young composer's teeming energy and irreverent sense of fun, not least in the tiny, explosive *Presto* finales. With detailed notes from Huss and vivid, natural recorded sound, this superbudget-price compilation of recordings from the 1990s makes an attractive, offbeat contribution to the 2009 Haydn junketings. **Richard Wigmore**

Hindemith

Kammermusik No 7, Op 46 No 2^{ab}. Kleine Kammermusik, Op 24 No 2^b. Three Organ Sonatas^a. Zwei Stücke für Orgel^a

^aDaniel Hyde org

^bBritten Sinfonia / Benjamin Bayl

Signum Classics © SIGCD159 (77' • DDD)

^aPlayed on the Kuhn organ at Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge

A resplendent representation of Hindemith's organ oeuvre



This disc positively sparkles! With such intelligent and innovative programming, it is the ideal introduction to Hindemith's organ music.

Since there is insufficient solo organ music to fill a complete disc, the solution is to add *Kammermusik* No 7, which is effectively the first organ concerto (albeit with an ensemble of wind instruments and lower strings).

The novelty on this disc is the premiere recording of *Zwei Stücke*. Dating from August 1918 (when Hindemith was still in military uniform), these pieces straddle the dying embers of late Romanticism and the leaner, more contrapuntal aridity of the 1920s. Their shapeliness and colourfulness are striking and worthy of repeated hearings. There is plenty of registrational variety, too, in Daniel Hyde's nicely judged performances of the three solo sonatas. The seemingly modest new two-manual Swiss Kuhn organ installed in Jesus College, Cambridge, provides plenty of punch and a wide dynamic range. I would have liked a little more definition in some of the melodic lines, for example the 4ft pitch solo in the pedals in the jolly third movement of the Third Sonata.

Hindemith's impish characteristics are more to the fore in the wind quintet *Kleine Kammermusik*. This multifaceted work is a model for all would-be composers for this combination. Nicholas Daniel's oboe-playing is an especial delight, and the third-movement waltz and folkly finale are brought off to perfection.

The chapel acoustic is ideal for all these pieces, which are recorded with maximum fidelity. This is a thoroughly recommendable disc. **Malcolm Riley**

Mozart

Bastien und Bastienne – Overture. La clemenza di Tito, K621 – Overture; March. Così fan tutte – Overture. Don Giovanni – Overture. Die Entführung aus dem Serail – Overture. Idomeneo – Overture; March, Act 3; Pas seul de Monsieur Legrand. Mitridate, rè di Ponto – Overture; March, Act 1. Le nozze di Figaro – Overture; March, Act 3. Les petits riens – Overture. Der Schauspieldirektor – Overture. Die Zauberflöte – Overture; March of the Priests

Norwegian National Opera Orchestra /

Rinaldo Alessandrini

Naïve © OP30479 (66' • DDD)

The cover art's a bungle, nevertheless this is a fine disc of Mozart overtures



What muppet designs Naïve's cover art? We got used to the striking array of painted ladies that adorned the label's Vivaldi Edition until we were pulled up short when they

put a bloke on the front of *Tito Manlio* (4/06). On the cover of this disc, for some reason, the puppet Flat Eric beams out from a bank of white left-luggage lockers.

An album of overtures, shorn of their operas, may seem a curious remnant from the LP era. Who now would put on such a CD and listen through it? I have to admit, though, that the sweep of the programme – running the gamut

'Alessandrini has an innate understanding of Mozart's conception of "sonata form" as a concentrated drama'

from the Italianate sinfonia style of the *Mitridate* overture to the late miniature masterpieces – and the zippy performances won me over. The man pulling the strings is Rinaldo Alessandrini, who has an innate understanding of Mozart's conception of "sonata form" as concentrated drama. He makes you realise, for instance, why *Figaro* is subtitled *La folle giornata* ("The day of madness"), moving from perky opening statement through increasingly convoluted development to true catharsis as the work draws to its conclusion.

He also has an uncanny ear for sonority. For example, the fetish among practitioners of "historically aware" performance (and this disc falls into that category, despite the Norwegian band's use of modern instruments) has been for trumpets to punch out gobbets of punctuation on downbeats. Alessandrini makes the brass an integral part of the woodwind choir: hear how beautifully they are incorporated into the wind chords in *The Magic Flute* – just one of the vivid and thought-provoking details that make this such a delightful disc. Perhaps, though, the Zig (&) Zag Territoires label should poach Naïve's designer. **David Thresher**

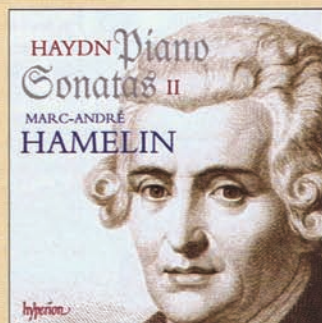
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HAYDN PIANO SONATAS VOLUME 2

Marc-André Hamelin's first set of Haydn Piano Sonatas was Hyperion's best-selling release of 2007, and had the critics jostling to acclaim his performances in the highest terms. His second volume, released in a year where new Haydn recordings are prominent, should surely match the critical and commercial success of the first. Some of Haydn's most alluring and appealing keyboard works are recorded here

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

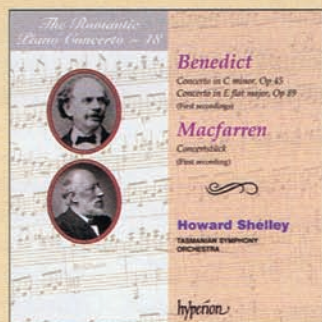


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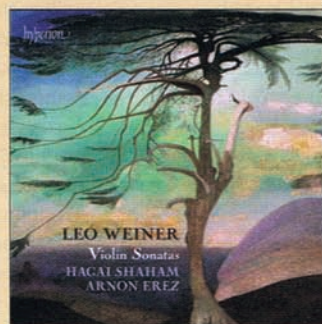


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WEINER VIOLIN SONATAS

Hagai Shaham has made himself the master of the Hungarian idiom which prevailed in much Romantic violin music. He now turns to a composer who was one of the leading figures of new Hungarian music in the first few years of the twentieth century, although largely forgotten now. It is easy to fathom from this selection of Leó Weiner's music for violin and piano why the composer was originally such a much-loved figure.

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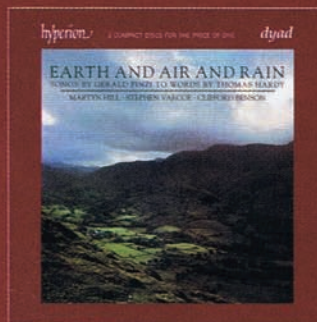


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Mozart

Five Violin Concertos

Kremerata Baltica / Gidon Kremer *vn*Nonesuch **M** 2 7559 798863 (111' • DDD)

Recorded live during the Salzburg Festival in 2006

Selected comparison:

Carmignola, Italian Mozart Orch, Abbado

(9/08) (ARCH) 477 7371AH2

Kremer plays Mozart with finesse but can the Kremerata match him?

One of the great violinists of our day, Gidon Kremer is someone I always want to hear. I am not so sure about his chamber orchestra however. One might say he leads and they follow. There is punctuality and alertness, and the set is not without moments when you feel everyone is listening to each other and involved in an integrated endeavour. Yet moments they are, unsustained, and the all-purpose vigour predominating in the outer movements, contrasted with a vaguely songful quality in the middle ones, leaves me longing for more subtlety and range. The orchestra is not unkempt but it does not appear to have been cared for, and these lovely pieces would certainly have benefited from more rigorous rehearsal of the detail. Finesse is on the agenda only for the soloist is my impression, and concerted definition of character that depends on detailed phrasing and accentuation from everybody, as well as precisely judged sound, isn't achieved. Distinguished though Kremer is as a soloist, the lack of it is likely to deter me from returning to his Mozart often.

Go to a comparison with Giuliano Carmignola and the Italian Mozart Orchestra and Abbado and a couple of minutes are enough to make evident what is missing. There, you have colour which "works" as an element of the whole and isn't just added on; the dynamics too, which are thought about for what they contribute to quality of sound and not just its loudness, and making the flux of continuity so much more interesting. Rarely do the Kremerata Baltica give us a *cantabile* softness, while in *forte* they tend to be fierce, as if a strong statement must also be a shout. To be fair, DG Archiv's top-notch recording is superior to this Nonesuch in most respects, though Kremer himself is nicely reproduced. I hear an audience here and there and wonder whether all of his set derives from concert performances.

Kremer makes you listen – whereas Carmignola and Abbado, coming from a less traditional direction, leave you agape with wonder at their insight and powers of rediscovery. I mustn't use them as a stick with which to beat the new contender but there really is no contest. Abbado's first period-instrument recording with his new orchestra and this soloist proclaims a ►

Fiddler's fantasy

Chinese violinist Tianwa

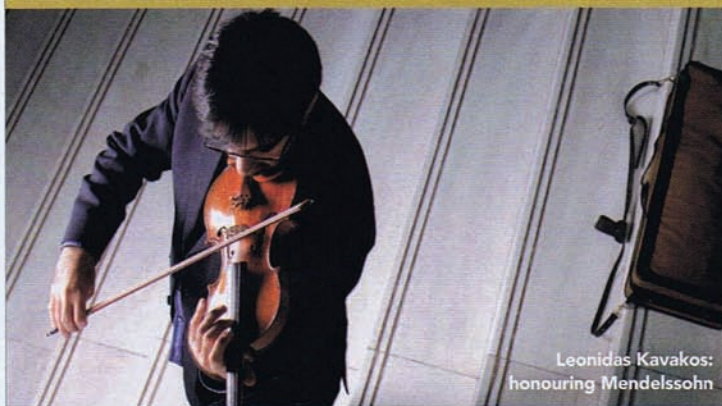
Yang recorded Vol 3 of her planned seven-disc Naxos collection of the complete works of Pablo de Sarasate during June. The album, devoted to his works for violin and orchestra, featured the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra Pablo Sarasate under artistic director Ernest Martínez-Izquierdo, and included the *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette* concert fantasies, *Introduction et caprice-jota*, *Navarra*, *Muñeira* and *Gondoliera veneziana*. Vols 1 and 2 in the series showcased duo partner Markus Hadulla in violin-and-piano works, and were released in August 2006 and November 2007.

Corp glorious

October sees the premiere recording of Ronald Corp's Symphony No 1 and Piano Concerto on Dutton. Corp himself conducts the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, with soloist Leon McCawley performing in the Concerto. The Symphony is a 20-minute single-movement work containing four contrasting sections. Its "dark and brooding opening" follows "a Nordic tradition, with echoes of late Sibelius," according to the label, "and marks a distinct departure from the flamboyant choral works for which Corp is best known". The Concerto was described by *Musical Opinion* after its 1997 premiere as "the most winningly successful British piano concerto of the last 40 years".

More Mahler

Valery Gergiev and the LSO continue their Mahler symphony cycle with the release of the Fifth in November. Symphony No 2, reviewed in March, was described by David Gutman as "more a souvenir of a thrilling night out than a serious contender for the library shelves", but nevertheless a "unique interpretation".

EDITOR'S CHOICELeonidas Kavakos:
honouring Mendelssohn

Refreshingly
gimmick-free –
and positively
life-enhancing

**Mendelssohn**Violin Concerto, Op 64^a. Piano Trios^b – No 1, Op 49; No 2, Op 66^aPatrick Demenga *vc* ^bEnrico Pace *pf*^aSalzburg Camerata / ^{ab}Leonidas Kavakos *vn*Sony Classical **M** 88697 43303-2 (83' • DDD)

Concerto & Trio No 1 – selected comparison:

Mutter, Masur (5/09) (DG) 477 8001GH2

Concerto – selected comparisons:

Hahn, Oslo PO, Janowski (4/03) (SONY) SK89921

Hope, Hengelbrock (11/07) (DG) 477 6634GH

Trios – selected comparison:

Fischer, Müller-Schott, Gilad (10/06) (PENT) PTC5186 085

This is the first release in Mendelssohn year to have come my way that truly adds to the festivities. It has in common with Mutter's high-profile release both the Concerto and the D minor Piano Trio, but there the similarities end. This is quite without gimmicks, with no bonus DVD and without the airbrushing – musical or otherwise. Kavakos offers a compelling, unsugary reading of the Concerto (where, for a change, you sense the legacy of Beethoven as much as anyone). But lack of heart-on-sleeve isn't to suggest in any way a lack of expression: quite the reverse – how Kavakos revels in those moments of introspection, the violin looking down from way, way up in the stratosphere. There's plenty of fine detail, too, both in the solo part and the orchestra, but there's always a sense of it arising out of the music; Mutter by comparison sounds very premeditated. The Camerata's playing is an additional delight, creating an intimate rapport with the soloist.

In lesser hands, Kavakos's moderate tempo for the slow movement might threaten to drag, but – as Hilary Hahn has previously shown – if the interpretation is sufficiently interesting, it can still convince, even though for my taste the slightly swifter Hope is better still. The finale is less an explosion of exuberance than Hope's, but Kavakos's filigree lightness bodes well for the chamber music and the climactic build-up is utterly life-enhancing.

The trios are on a similar level, with Kavakos joined by two superb musicians. It's striking in the second movement of the D minor Trio that they observe Mendelssohn's detached markings – unlike many who can't resist the temptation to swoon here. And the Trio of the same work is a relief after the caution of the Mutter recording, the pianist Enrico Pace almost giving Jonathan Gilad (with Fischer and Müller-Schott) a run for his money.

If there's less mystery about the C minor's opening than revealed by Fischer et al, then the slow movement is beautifully poised and the finale justifiably exultant. **Harriet Smith**



TESTAMENT

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Richard Wagner Die Walküre

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Stereo



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Classical stance and a Classical sound as being what these pieces demand. In everything from the length of short notes to the weight of accents they communicate variety and exactitude. No generalised atmosphere, no treading of water. The grace and spring to their step, and the air from their side of the Alps, are indeed different. So is the sheen to their playing and its unanimity of purpose. Their set includes the great *Sinfonia concertante* for violin and viola, by the way, and they really do raise the bar a bit.

Stephen Plaistow

Roman

'The Swedish Virtuoso'

Flute Concerto. Partita, BeRI/8. Royal Wedding Music, 'Drottningholm Music' - I. Sinfonias - BeRI/22; BeRI/27. Trio Sonata, BeRI/113. Violin Concerto, BeRI/52 REBaroque / Maria Lindal Proprius © PRCD2044 (58' • DDD)

Roman the Swede delivers the goods - despite a right royal muddle



Johan Helmich Roman (1694-1758) was the first Swedish composer of note. Various dubbed "the father of Swedish music", "the Swedish Handel" and "the Swedish virtuoso", he was employed at court but was also given freedom to travel abroad. He raised the standard of music at the Swedish royal chapel, organised public concerts and advocated the use of the Swedish language in choral works, both sacred and secular. For about five years up to 1721 Roman was in London, where he knew Bononcini and Handel.

His instruments were the violin and the oboe. As a composer he adapted works by his contemporaries, resulting in questions of authenticity that remain unresolved. The present recording gives a good idea of his range: well travelled as he was, he picked up stylistic elements from France, Italy and north Germany. Four of the works here have an old-fashioned cast, each movement rooted in the same tonic, major or minor; but there is plenty of variety. The *Sinfonia* in D minor, BeRI/27, has an

'Well travelled as he was, Roman picked up stylistic elements from France, Italy and north Germany'

arresting opening, a stern, dotted figure over a descending chromatic bass; the second movement of the Partita in C minor is not only rhythmically teasing but turns out to be thematically related to the preceding *Largo*.

REBaroque dispatches this agreeable music with skill, but the Trio Sonata is marred by a strange fade-in at the beginning of track 18. The booklet confuses Queen Ulrika Eleonora with

Queen Louisa Ulrika: it was the latter who was the sister of Frederick the Great, and for whose wedding in 1744 Roman composed the *Royal Wedding Music*, the first movement of which concludes the disc. **Richard Lawrence**

Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 5, Op 64. Hamlet, Op 67 City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons Orfeo © C780 091A (65' • DDD) Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on October 16 & 17, 2008

Craft and classical beauty but this Tchaikovsky fails to catch fire



Andris Nelsons, the CBSO's much-vaunted new chief conductor, is nothing if not mindful of Tchaikovsky the classicist. A high level of refinement is evident throughout

these immaculately voiced performances. His Tchaikovsky - very controlled, level-headed - is pretty much a histrionic-free zone; which may be to some readers' tastes but for me represents only half the picture. Yes, Tchaikovsky was a classicist at heart but behind that traditional mask and beneath the well crafted exteriors burnt a fierce temperament. What I don't get here in the symphony is the heat of Dudamel or the venerable - and still unsurpassed - Mravinsky. And surely, however controlled and well sculpted a performance is, there must at least be the "illusion" of abandon?

With Nelsons, thoughtfulness and beauty (Orfeo's sound is exemplary) are too often ends in themselves. The yearning second theme of the *Allegro con anima* in the first movement is so self-regarding as to compromise the release; the bassoon-led group in the same movement is so manicured as to border on precious. All power to the CBSO woodwinds whose contributions are a model of elegance but even the aforementioned bassoon (traditionally a dancer with two left feet) gives us an exquisite turn in the third movement waltz.

You might describe this performance as Imperial with a capital "I". The slow movement's horn solo is patrician rather than mistily romantic; the finale is fine and upstanding but never impulsive. The calculated shock of the *Allegro vivace* must surely be pressed to the edge of reckless to register its Slavonic temperament. Even the flashy clarinet embellishment at one point feels robbed of its spontaneity.

Nelsons's reading of the *Hamlet* Fantasy Overture exhibits many of the same qualities - unfailingly musical, impressive, even statuesque, but emotionally rather cool. We don't even begin to get inside the conflicted prince's head. Nelsons does, however, catch Ophelia's distracted beauty and the real revelation here comes with his lucid hearing of the strange

The Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra and Ivor Bolton on OehmsClassics



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GRAMOPHONE



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off-kilter harmonisation in the development of her music. That is remarkable – the rest, for now, just isn't. **Edward Seckerson**

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^aTony Arnold, ^bClaire Booth *sops*
^cDavid Wilson-Johnson *bass* ^dSimon Joly *Chorale*;
^ePhilharmonia Orchestra; ^fTwentieth Century Classics Ensemble / Robert Craft
Naxos Ⓢ 8 557531 (80' • DDD)

Austerity and precision do not distract from the integrity of Webern's vision



Now in his eighties, Robert Craft is re-recording Webern more than half a century after his pioneering CBS album. This instalment mixes early, middle and

late compositions in an order that makes an effective programme when heard straight through. Both British and American artists are involved, and recordings were made in London and New York during 2007 and 2008.

Craft has not lost his edge: his admirably extensive booklet-notes detail the failings of Webern performance materials (a new, complete and definitive edition is at last being planned), and the inadequacies of other conductors (Boulez is shamed but not named). Whether or not adhering precisely to the published metronome markings is invariably a good thing, Craft's performances are certainly characterful and precise. It could be the recording process that has flattened out some of the dynamic shadings that he would surely have insisted on in actual performance; and other features of the sound – like an exceptionally prominent alto saxophone in the rarefied cantata *Das Augenlicht* – might have been an intentional interpretative nuance, jarring though it is.

The need for contrapuntal clarity could also explain the rather unatmospheric acoustic, more helpful to singers than instrumentalists. Soprano Tony Arnold is admirably mellifluous in the song sets, the wide-spanning lines given their full lyrical weight. Claire Booth and David Wilson-Johnson are no less impressive in Webern's last completed work, the Op 31 Cantata.

This disc also includes Webern's most strongly contrasted orchestral scores, the fugitive Op 10 Pieces and the craggy Variations, Op 30. Their effect in these sharply delineated performances – a quality no less apparent in the ultra-eccentric arrangement of Bach's Ricercata – may be more austere than affectionate, but the fierce originality and integrity of Webern's vision of musical perfection is never in doubt.

Arnold Whittall

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Fabio di Cäsola:
dazzling and delicious



Weber's infectious clarinet showpieces performed with wit and relish

Weber

Clarinet Concertos – No 1, Op 73; No 2, Op 74. Clarinet Quintet, Op 34 (version for clarinet and string orchestra)
Fabio di Cäsola *d* Russian Chamber Philharmonic,
 St Petersburg / **Juri Gilbo**
Sony Classical Ⓢ 88697 37632-2 (67' • DDD)

Weber's works for clarinet take only second place in the repertoire to those of Mozart and they are enlivened with a delectable touch of wit that is all his own, and which here the excellent young Swiss soloist, Fabio di Cäsola, clearly relishes. It was a celebrated contemporary clarinetist, Heinrich Baermann, who attracted the composer to the instrument. He had a special clarinet made with 10 keys and Weber wrote a total of 10 pieces for him to play on it, all of them delightfully tuneful and with acres of roulades to test the virtuosity of the player, who here comes up trumps.

Such enticing works, admirable showpieces too, have received many recordings, notably scintillating accounts of the two concertos from our own Emma Johnson (ASV, 7/91), but Martin Fröst (BIS, 2/07) is hardly less seductive, and he, like the light-hearted Sabine Meyer (EMI), also offers the arrangement of the Quintet. However, I have to say that Fabio di Cäsola's performances are dazzling and Juri Gilbo's persuasive partnership in slow movements is romantic in the best Weberian operatic style. The twirly-whirly *Menuetto capriccio* of the arranged Quintet is deliciously done, and the closing *gioioso* is wonderfully infectious. The performances are capped by the bravura scales in the final jaunty *Allegro polacca* of Concerto No 2. The SACD sound is splendidly atmospheric, so this can be strongly recommended. **Ivan March**

'All of them are delightfully tuneful and with acres of roulades to test the virtuosity of the player'



INTERVIEW

Fabio di Cäsola

One of my first experiences as a soloist took place in my hometown of Lugano with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana. It was a performance of the F minor Concerto (No 1) and I was still studying at the time so it was almost a little too difficult, but it was the first time I'd experienced the music of Weber and he's a composer I admire greatly.

Although Weber did not play the instrument himself he was fortunate enough to work with Heinrich Baermann who was one of the greatest clarinet virtuosos of his generation. He inspired Weber to write several works for him and in many ways you could say that they are like Paganini for the clarinet: he definitely pushed the boundaries a little further with regards to technique, expressivity and virtuosity. It is also interesting to see the two versions of the concerto: there's the early version written without Baermann's input and the second version with – this is one of the reasons why performances of the F minor Concerto can vary greatly. It is up to the performer to choose which elements from both versions they want to use.

Italian opera is something I have loved since I was a child. I was always hearing it and the clarinet concertos of Weber are very much like opera to me: I love how expressive they are. There are so many different personalities that it feels more like a dialogue than a monologue. Plus, there's also the Romantic concept of the oneness of man and nature. It had a profound influence on Weber and you can hear that in works like *Der Freischütz* and *Oberon*. It's quite fortunate for me that where I live is so isolated. When the weather permits I like to practise outside in my garden. For me this is very important – the relationship between man and nature has always fascinated me.

Interview by
Hayden Jones

Michael Rabin

Bruch Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26^a **Kroll** Banjo and Fiddle^b **Saint-Saëns** Havanaise, Op 83^c **Sarasate** Carmen Fantasy, Op 25^b. Danzas españolas^b – Malagueña, Op 21 No 1; Habanera, Op 21 No 2; Zapateado, Op 23 No 2 **Tchaikovsky** Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op 42 – No 1 Méditation^b **Wieniawski** Caprice, Op 18 No 4 (arr Kreisler)^b
Michael Rabin *vn* **Lothar Broddack** *pf*^c **RIAS** Symphony Orchestra, Berlin / Thomas Schippers
 Audite © AUDITE95 607 (70' • ADD)
 Recorded c1962, ab1969

Violin brilliance from a player taken from us far too early



Michael Rabin's was a talent that even among a plethora of great violinists was something rather special, and we're lucky to have so many fine records that recall it, whether

studio or live. Rabin died in 1972, apparently from a head injury sustained in a fall at his New York apartment. He was 35 and victim of a neurological condition that necessitated debilitating medication. Rumours of psychological problems and drug mismanagement were rife, and yet in spite of these and other problems Rabin managed an impressive comeback, as this svelte but musically responsive account of Bruch's First Concerto (the only complete Rabin version that I know of) amply proves. The line is mostly seamless, the tone warm and seductive, the bowing impeccably drawn. Thomas Schippers conducts a thoughtful if occasionally overweight accompaniment, somewhat muddily recorded although the violin sound is excellent. Just two points: the slow movement is occasionally troubled by an unobtrusive knocking and the leisurely movement timing of 9'45" includes well over a minute's worth of shuffling and tuning, so you needn't fear undue solemnity.

The shorter works include a brilliant account of Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* and a tenderly phrased Tchaikovsky *Méditation*. I also love the cheeky close to Kroll's *Banjo and Fiddle*. The other items relate the same happy impression, a technical wizard and an artist in total command of his instrument, someone

'The items relate the same happy impression, a technical wizard and an artist in total command of his instrument'

who would surely have developed an extra musical dimension had he been granted another 30 or so years to do so. Sadly he wasn't but this well mastered programme of radio broadcasts is a valuable addition to Rabin's precious legacy.

Rob Cowan

'I Was Like WOW!'

Castérède Concertino^a **Gaubert** Morceau symphonique^b **Honegger** Hommage du trombone exprimant la tristesse de l'auteur absent^c **Jongen** Aria et Polonaise^d **Martin** Ballade^e **Mozart** 'Jener Donnerworte Kraft', K35^f **Padding** Second Piece. Third Piece **Veldhuis** I was like WOW
Jörgen van Rijen *tbn* **Marcel Beekman** *ten*
^aFrits Damrow *tp* ^{ab}de Paolo Giacometti *pf*
^cCombattimento Consort / Jan Willem de Vriend
 Channel Classics © CCSSA26909
 (64' • DDD/DSD)

This ragbag provides a fascinating portrait of a master trombonist



Jacob ter Veldhuis's *I was like WOW* (2003) makes uncomfortable listening, featuring graphic, taped reminiscences of two maimed US soldiers describing how they came

by their injuries, variously accompanied, counterpointed or shadowed by the often melancholy trombone part and a largely static synthesised soundtrack. It is the weightiest item of this showcase to Jörgen van Rijen's virtuosity, although Martin's Ballade (1940), given an exceptionally fine performance here, provides the more satisfying musical experience. Van Rijen is audibly adept at fast-paced music, as in the outer

'Jörgen Van Rijen's virtuoso technique need fear no comparison with the best in this field'

spans of Castérède's tripartite neo-classical Concertino for trombone, trumpet and piano, a reworking of his 1957 Trombone Sonata.

Yet it is van Rijen's sense of line that is the most impressive feature of his playing, reliant on musicianship rather than physical dexterity. The Mozart aria from 1767, part of a collaborative work written with Michael Haydn and Anton Adgasser, illustrates this well, as does Gaubert's *Morceau symphonique* – yet another of those test-pieces for the Paris Conservatoire that has enriched the repertoire of every wind instrument. The Aria of Jongen's *Aria et Polonaise* (1944) is invested with a nobility that is utterly winning.

Van Rijen himself clearly enjoys the challenge of contemporary repertoire, as the scores by Padding (a pair of penetrating unaccompanied studies from 2004-05) and Veldhuis (listed here under his alternate cognomen of "JacobTV") confirm; and his virtuoso technique need fear no comparison with the best in this field. His connection with the more tender side of his instrument is shown nowhere better than in the opening Honegger homage, written for Koussevitzky in 1925 by way of apology for not attending a concert. **Guy Rickards**

'A Treasury of Russian Romantic Piano'

Bortkiewicz Piano Sonata No 2, Op 60 **Liadov** Preludes – Op 11 No 1; Op 57 No 1 **Liapunov** Lesghinka **Medtner** Meditation, Op 39 No 1. Fairy Tale, Op 8 No 2 **Rachmaninov/A Borodin** Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 **Rachmaninov/Kreisler** Liebesleid and Liebesfreud **Rebikov** The Christmas Tree – Waltz. Musical Snuff Box **Scriabin** Fantasy, Op 28
Nadejda Vlaeva *pf*
 Music & Arts © CD1224 (77' • DDD)

Inspired playing of this superb collection of Russian bonbons



Though written in 1942, the musical language of Bortkiewicz's Second Sonata would not have sounded out of place had it been composed 50 years earlier, but it is no mere

pastiche Chopin-Tchaikovsky. Its four movements are awash with gorgeous themes (replete with two brief but obvious quotes from Rachmaninov's Second Concerto and one, according to booklet-writer Farhan Malik, from Kalinnikov's First Symphony). Fellow fans of Bortkiewicz's First Piano Concerto will need no further prodding. The work requires an unabashed romantic approach to bring it off convincingly and duly receives it: the talented Miss Vlaeva does ecstasy extremely well.

The two Medtner pieces that follow are precisely characterised, the quasi Latin-American rhythm of the *Fairy Tale* infectiously captured. Just when the tone of the programme is in danger of becoming one-dimensional, Miss Vlaeva gives us two little Liadov Preludes of heart-melting beauty (why don't pianists play them more often?). These alone are worth the price of the disc. Then we're back to *transports de joie* once more with Scriabin's Fantasy (superb) and a bravura performance of Liapunov's *Lesghinka* (a homage to Balakirev's *Islamey*) to

'Vlaeva gives us two little Liadov Preludes of heart-melting beauty...why don't pianists play them more often?'

round off proceedings. Between them come the two Rebikov miniatures (the waltz from *The Christmas Tree* was a Cherkassky favourite) and, if *Liebesleid* lacks that last touch of *Weltschmerz*, the melancholy of *Vocalise*, heard in a recent (2003), unusually detailed transcription by Anton Borodin, is poised and understated.

This is an astutely chosen programme that bears repeated listening, expertly recorded and with some truly inspired playing. I look forward eagerly to Nadejda Vlaeva's next disc.

Jeremy Nicholas

Film music

Schifrin's slight return • The Da Vinci sequel

Schifrin

Return from the River Kwai – Original Soundtrack.
Japanese theme composed by Kitaro
orchestra / Lalo Schifrin

Harkit Records © HRKCD8259 (53' • ADD)

Lalo Schifrin misses the mark with this uninspired sequel soundtrack



Return from the River Kwai, released in 1989, has little in common with the David Lean film of 30 years earlier which had an Academy Award-winning score by Malcolm Arnold with more

than a little help from Kenneth J. Alford. Here another eminent composer, Lalo Schifrin, is joined by Kitaro, who composed a Japanese theme for this film. The two styles are ill-matched and there is no possibility of re-working the one in counterpoint to the other as Arnold brought off with his *Bridge on the River Kwai* March and "Colonel Bogey". The sleeve-note suggests that Schifrin sought to use the music from the earlier film, but to no avail. Maybe he was hoping for some inspiration, for it is evident that neither composer was able to work up any enthusiasm for this film, which is all the more disappointing for Schifrin fans after the recent joyous reissue of his score for *The Four Musketeers*. The only tune likely to linger on from this soundtrack will be "Pack up your troubles", a marching favourite from the Great War. Schifrin's music has been expertly brought back to life by audio restorer Gareth Williams from unpromising circumstances but sadly this soundtrack, like the negative impression left by the film itself, is a big yawn. **Adrian Edwards**



Doing Da Vinci again:
Angels and Demons

Zimmer

Angels and Demons – Original Soundtrack
Joshua Bell *on* chorus; orchestra / Hans Zimmer
Sony Classical © 88697 52096-2 (54' • DDD)

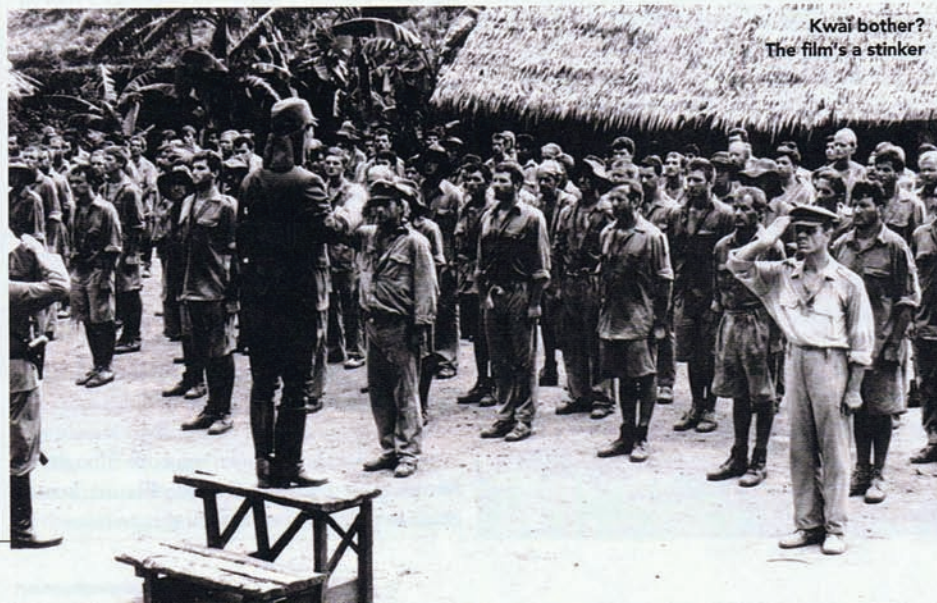
Joshua Bell injects life even though Zimmer delivers few fresh ideas

After the success of the film version of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons* follows on as the first of this summer's blockbusters, reuniting its author with director



Ron Howard, star Tom Hanks and composer Hans Zimmer. The critics have been no more enthusiastic about this film than its predecessor, nor have audiences embraced it to

the same extent. After Zimmer's interesting soundtrack to *The Da Vinci Code*, we find him marking time with few fresh ideas. His trademarks of ambient music, walloping percussion and toccata-like rhythms are plentiful, though they manage to create a suspenseful atmosphere of shady goings-on. Another Zimmer trait is his minimalist writing which dominates the enjoyable, fast-moving opening track as choral textures are tossed to and fro across the sound spectrum. It matters not one iota that listeners will be put in mind of "Make a joyful noise" from Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* as the piece surges along. The second track brings the drama into focus with Joshua Bell representing the angel, his eloquent violin-playing harried by scurrying accompaniment and demonic voices. "Science and Religion" brings us to the heart of the score where the violin and chorus spin out an extension of the theme "Chevaliers de Sangréal", first heard in *The Da Vinci Code*. One oddity is that the chorus who play such a crucial role on this soundtrack are not credited on the CD. **Adrian Edwards**



Kwai bother?
The film's a stinker

Chamber

Mozart from Podger and Cooper • Sumptuous Saint-Saëns • Rare Rachmaninov

Bach

'Sonatas with Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord'
Viola da gamba Sonatas, BWV1027-29^a. Sonata,
BWV964^b. Trio Sonata No 4, BWV528^c. Nun komm
der Heiden Heiland, BWV660^d
^aAlfredo Bernardini ^{ob} ^{ac}Cassandra Luckhardt
^{va da gamba} ^{abc}Pieter Dirksen ^{hpd}
Et cetera © KTC1365 (78' • DDD)

Bach 'surprises' alongside more familiar works – but approach with caution



A strapline on a Bach CD of sonatas that reads "first complete recording" can set either hearts aflutter or alarm bells ringing. The three known sonatas for harpsichord and viol have been recorded many times. When Ton Koopman and Jordi Savall set them down in 2000, they followed Bach's own practice by appropriating the Organ Sonata BWV529 as a further "Sonata IV in C".

Harpsichordist and musicologist Pieter Dirksen has here produced three more surprise works. In BWV964, the rarely heard transcription for solo harpsichord of the Violin Sonata BWV1003, the quick movements fare extremely well, sounding much more

'Dirksen believes he has reconstructed an earlier work dating from Bach's Weimar period'

effervescent and less laboured than in their better-known version, though the *Grave* and *Andante* inevitably lack the subtlety and range of colour a violin can bring.

Dirksen fleshes out the CD with two "reconstructions" incorporating oboe d'amore and oboe respectively. With BWV528, which combines a sinfonia from Cantata No 76 with movements – the source of the exotic middle movement is not made clear – from the Organ Sonata BWV528, Dirksen believes he has reconstructed an earlier work dating from Bach's Weimar period. Reservations aside, it works very well and is stylishly performed, though some may find the excessively long final notes annoying.

Dirksen has also produced a three-part setting of the organ chorale *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* in which the oboe takes the chorale tune and the viol and harpsichord the obbligato bass

parts. Although the music is undeniably beautiful, the arrangement sounds contrived.

Instead of being a showcase for Cassandra Luckhardt's polished viol-playing, this CD is really about the art and artistry of Pieter Dirksen. Beware of strapline.

Julie Anne Sadie

Bach

Flute Sonatas – BWV997; BWV1030^b; BWV1033;
BWV1034; BWV1035
Hugo Reyne ^{rec/ten fl} Pierre Hantaï ^{hpd}
Emmanuelle Guigues ^{va da gamba}
Mirare © MIR038 (70' • DDD)

Brave Bach arrangements and adaptations that yield mixed results



Bach the adapter and rearranger finds imitators in three of today's musicians, Hugo Reyne, Pierre Hantaï and Emmanuelle Guigues. They adapt and rearrange his music. The flute sonatas BWV1033, 1034 and 1035 are transposed upwards and played on a recorder; and BWV997, originally only for lute or keyboard, has also been transposed upwards in a reconstruction that also includes a recorder. Only BWV1030^b – an earlier, higher-pitched version of BWV1030 – is played on a flute, here a tenor version also called a "flauto d'amore". Would Bach have cared about these changes? Almost certainly not; this sort of thing was common in his lifetime.

The results on this occasion are not an unqualified success. Recorded balance presents a problem because Reyne is too prominently placed. The unrelenting nature of some of his playing is emphasised while topmost notes can be piercing. The recorded level is also uncomfortably high, but reducing the volume tends to push Guigues into the background. Reyne is like a chameleon, switching between abstemiousness (for instance, in the Fugue of BWV997, the first *Allegro* of BWV1034, the *Allegro assai* of BWV1035) and expressive complacency of the sort that he brings to the *Andante/Presto* of BWV1033.

Unusually, he eschews embellishment, which accentuates his often bald approach. Ironically, perhaps, the finest performance is of BWV1030^b, where the mellow tones of the flute combine with an easy lyricism to bring out the best in the whole ensemble. Was Bach's choice of instrument right after all?

Nalen Anthoni

Bridge

Piano Quintet^a. Cherry Ripe. Lament. Rhapsody Trio.
Sir Roger de Coverley. Three Noveletten
Bridge Quartet (Colin Twigg, Catherine Schofield *vn*
Michael Schofield *va* Lucy Wilding *vc*);
^aMichael Dussek *pf*
Somm Céleste Series © SOMMCD087
(78' • DDD)

Well recorded, dedicated performances of some of Bridge's earlier works



Somm here offers a warm, true account of one of Frank Bridge's most important chamber pieces, the Piano Quintet, which represents his early work at its finest. The Bridge

Quartet with Michael Dussek give a dedicated performance that's very well recorded, following it up with shorter pieces from the same period.

The three *Noveletten* reflect a period before the First World War, when titles in German were normal, and here find expression in beautifully crafted trifles. The *Rhapsody Trio* and *Lament* reflect the development in Bridge's music towards

'The Bridge Quartet with Michael Dussek give a dedicated performance that's very well recorded'

a more astringent style, which culminated many years later in his final-period works.

Cherry Ripe and *Sir Roger de Coverley* are skilful pieces based on those two folk themes. All told, this is an attractive collection of Bridge's shorter chamber pieces, neatly presented in affectionate, idiomatic performances.

Edward Greenfield

Cardew

Treatise
QUaX Ensemble / Petr Kotik
Mode © 2 MODE205 (108' • ADD)
Recorded live in Prague, 1967

A valuable release – because the players often had no idea where they were going

In October 1967 flautist Petr Kotik's QUaX Ensemble gave a performance of Cornelius Cardew's graphic-score masterwork *Treatise* in Prague and, happily for us, someone thought to record it. Now Kotik and Mode Records boss Brian Brandt have remastered this precious

Cornelius Cardew

piece of history and it sounds very good indeed: febrile, expansive, itchy with life.

Treatise was Cardew's most trail-blazing moment, a source of

boundless ideas, controversies and rethinks. On the page his 193-leaf graphic score is a beautiful thing that makes you fall, Alice-like, towards sound. Running throughout is an empty stave (broken only exceptionally), above which Cardew's intricate calligraphy has circles rotating inside circles, masses of fractal-like linear activity, lunar landscape shapes and pulverised conventional notation that has disembodied notes and accidentals melting against abstract graphics. Appropriately for a composer who had recently migrated from Stockhausen's overbearing control to join free-improvisation collective AMM, these symbols don't come with a definitive codebook. To each player they mean whatever they mean.

Unlike the performers on Art Lange's overly practised, slick 1999 version (hatART), these players often – and quite obviously – have no idea what should come next, and busy silences punctuate as they intuit how to move forwards. Sometimes they land themselves in a cul-de-sac; more often they jump with an ecstatic leap of collective faith towards bold new freedoms. It would be easy to lampoon the period trimmings: the bouncing ping-pong balls, a trumpet played with a bassoon reed, everyone doubling on violin whether they play violin or not. But every note is sincerity felt, every sound pursued to a beautiful, authentic core.

Philip Clark

Eisler • Halvorsen • Kodály • Schulhoff

Eisler Duo, Op 7 No 1 Halvorsen Passacaglia

Kodály Duo, Op 7 Schulhoff Duo

Susanna Yoko Henkel *vs* Tonio Henkel *vs*

The Spot Records © 28869-6 (58' • DDD)

Bold and characterful performances from this fine German-Japanese duo



Here is a violin-and-cello duo blessed with extraordinary gifts. And since The Spot Records offer little information I should add that this

brother-and-sister team is German-Japanese, and that Susanna Yoko Henkel has already recorded Bach's complete Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin.

Johan Halvorsen (1864–1935) was Norwegian, as his name declares, and based his Passacaglia on a much-loved movement from Handel's Harpsichord Suite No 7 in G minor. A friend of Busoni's strongly influenced by Grieg, his ultra-demanding variations exploit every aspect of the violin-and-cello partnership. And such ►

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Journey's end for Rachel Podger and Gary Cooper



A fascinating collection of 'leftovers' to conclude the Cooper/Podger series



Mozart

'Complete Sonatas for Keyboard and Violin,

Vols 7 & 8'

Violin Sonatas – No 5, K10; No 6, K11; No 7, K12; No 8, K13; No 9, K14; No 10, K15; No 11, K26. Allegro, K372. Fantasia, K396. Variations, 'La bergère Célimène', K359. Six Variations, 'Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant', K360

Rachel Podger *vs* Gary Cooper *fp*

with Alison McGillivray *vc*

Channel Classics © 2 88 CCSSA28109 (115' • DDD)

This issue completes Cooper's and Podger's collected recordings of Mozart's music for keyboard and violin. At first sight, Volumes 7 and 8 might seem to consist of leftovers – Vol 8 devoted to a set of six sonatas (K10–15) written in London when Mozart was eight, and Vol 7, apart from the two variation sets composed shortly after he settled in Vienna, containing a sonata dating from his 1766 stay in The Hague, plus two fragments, completed after Mozart's death by Maximilian Stadler. In the event, however, both CDs are full of interest.

For the "London" Sonatas, Cooper plays a fine-sounding Kirkman harpsichord dating from the exact period of Mozart's English visit. With it he can make the most of the youthful virtuoso's ebullient keyboard invention, the textures further enriched by the inclusion of the optional cello part. One may have some doubts about the complete authenticity of Mozart's early sonatas (surviving manuscripts are in father Leopold's hand), but in K13, for example, the startlingly elaborate opening movement, the

plaintive minor-key *Andante* that follows and the extraordinary chromatic minuet all indicate an amazing emerging talent.

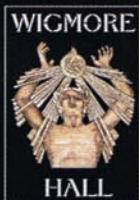
On the other disc, the K372 Allegro is given pride of place. Mozart left a sonata exposition that would have been the beginning of a magnificent work. If Stadler's completion lacks a Mozartian sense of tonal architecture, its sound

'Cooper plays a fine-sounding Kirkman harpsichord dating from the exact period of Mozart's English visit'

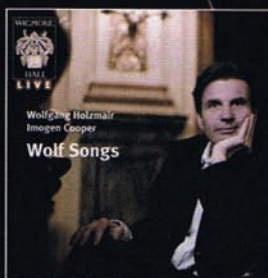
world is extremely convincing and provides a necessary context for the "genuine" music. Stadler completed K396 as a solo piano piece (the 27-bar fragment has only four bars of violin part). The result, in Cooper's words, is "a most personal tribute", and played here with much feeling and imagination.

Cooper and Podger perform the variations with typical verve; the many repeated sections provide opportunities for ornamentation, especially in K359, where Mozart obligingly indicates a pause – with the possibility of a mini cadenza – in each variation.

I find I don't always agree with Cooper's and Podger's interpretation – exaggerated drawing-out of many of the minuets' cadences, for instance – but it's impossible to ignore the individuality, vitality and commitment of their performances. **Duncan Druce**



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visceral force and intensity continue into Kodály, whose Duo was initially dismissed as the work of a talent as strong as it was errant, an estimate difficult to square with music whose wildness and rhapsody are resolved in a memorable *Adagio* evoking the mystique of the Puszta, the great plains at the heart of Hungary. In this movement the soaring violin line against the cello's *pizzicato* at the close is one of several profoundly expressive gestures.

Eisler (1898-1962) also exploits his chosen medium to the full, whether in his sweet-and-sour Minuet or in the second movement's exhilarating game of tag. Schulhoff (1894-1942) offers an infectious thrumming gypsy dance (a zingaresca), a lyrical flow of ideas in his *Andante* and a thrilling end to his concluding *Moderato*. All this is as convincing as it is intriguing, particularly when played with such unfaltering assurance and virtuosity. The Spot Records' sound is as bold and characterful as the performances. **Bryce Morrison**

Haydn

String Quartets, 'Tost II', Op 55 HobIII/60-62

Meta4 (Antti Tikkanen, Minna Pensola *vns* Atte Kilpeläinen *va* Tomas Djupsjöbacka *vc*)

Hänssler Classic © CD98 587 (46' • DDD)

Technique and expertise aplenty but this music deserves more from Meta4



The violins and viola of Meta4 play standing. The musicians say that by so doing, they feel "a huge difference, not only in the physical but also the emotional freedom". Does

this stance also contribute to an edgy first violin? Antti Tikkanen has a bleached, penetrating timbre that places her apart – as in the slow movement of No 1. Her first entry in the ninth bar, though played softly, isn't *dolce* as marked. There is no sweetness in her articulation, and only occasionally does she match the round sonorities and accommodating style of her partners.

Each of the three Minuets and Trios has a character of its own that she doesn't acknowledge. In all cases the playing is of a generalised metrical gait. There's no let-up for the lyrical Trio of No 1, little feeling for the sobriety of No 2 with its

'Tikkanen's insistent leadership tends to dominate, overriding the need for a yielding rhythmic elasticity'

darkened Trio in F minor, and not a hint of the relaxation called for in the triplets that make up the Trio of No 3. Tikkanen's insistent leadership tends to dominate, overriding the need for a yielding rhythmic elasticity that gives note-patterns a meaningful purpose. She doesn't try "to

divine what layers of spirit and expression lie beyond" (Susan Tones). Just once, in the first movement of No 3, Tikkanen softens her approach in an attempt to reach out for a personal understanding of the music. Otherwise, formidable technical expertise, rather than keen artistic sensibility, governs these performances.

Nalen Anthoni

Janáček • Nedbal • Novák

Janáček Violin Sonata **Nedbal** Violin Sonata, Op 9

Novák Violin Sonata

Ivan Zenaty *vn* **Martin Kasík** *pf*

Supraphon © SU3978-2 (64' • DDD)

A finely recorded recital from a spirited pair of musicians



It is Janáček's Sonata which dominates this recital, standing out from the other two by virtue of its ferocious originality. Yet this was not easily achieved: the work went

through numerous revisions before Janáček was able to write modestly to a friend (as John Tyrrell quotes in his monumental biography) declaring that while he did not regard the work as exceptional, "the second and third movements have a bit of truth in them". One of these is the

'Zenaty and Kasík play with a quick sensitivity about when to simplify, when to intensify the expression'

Balada, a warm, appealing piece which Zenaty and Kasík play with a quick sensitivity about when to simplify, when to intensify the expression. They are a fine sonata pair, working with a strong instinct for each other and recorded here with a very immediate acoustic. We are sitting in the front row.

The other two sonatas belong very much to the 19th century, both strongly influenced by the composer the loyal insert note studiously avoids mentioning, Brahms. Novák was a gifted pupil of Dvořák, who, according to Vladimír Lébl's useful little monograph, made him rewrite this sonata no fewer than seven times. It has an unmistakably Brahmsian sweep to the first movement, but escapes from under that shadow into a sunnier and more individual *Andante cantabile* and a finale which is a little forced but does include some charming ideas in dealing with the main subject. It is also excellently written for the instruments, as is the piece by Nedbal, a fellow pupil of Dvořák and once viola in the Czech Quartet. If the first movement is over-extended, it shows the exuberance of talented youth (Dvořák might

have told him to shorten it by half), and there is real charm in the *Andante*.

John Warrack

Klein • Schoenberg • Villa-Lobos

Klein Trio **Schoenberg** String Trio, Op 45 **Villa-Lobos** Trio

Jacques Thibaud Trio (Burkhard Maiss *vn* Philip Douvier *va* Bogdan Jianu *vc*)

Sophia Classics © SC17081 (62' • DDD)

Three contrasting trios from the Roaring Forties, well performed



The Jacques Thibaud Trio have been treading the boards for some 15 years and during that time have developed a keen taste for innovative programming.

Their third CD on Sophia

Classics offers a programme that, like its predecessors, balances contrasting styles, though this is the first to concentrate on a specific period, namely 1944 to 1946. The one "familiar" work, if that isn't an overstatement, is Schoenberg's knotty but absorbing String Trio, composed in the wake of a severe heart attack and sharing a thematic germ with, of all works, Sibelius's Fourth Symphony (you can hear it at around 2'20" into track 8). The Thibaud players venture deep into Schoenberg's variegated sound world, its dense arguments and energetic exploitation of various effects, reaching significant heights of expressive intensity for the work's slow, equivocal close.

Happily Schoenberg survived his Trio by a few years, whereas Gideon Klein's amazingly assured essay served as a prelude to his murder in Hitler's gas chambers. Days after completing it, he was packed off to Auschwitz and killed. Klein's Trio, which was written in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, only occasionally allows sadness to seep between the cracks: the main arguments are animated, inventive and colourful, the musical language not dissimilar to Martinů's, with a second movement based on a Czech cradle song. Midway between the trios of Klein (1944) and Schoenberg (1946)

'Gideon Klein's amazingly assured essay served as a prelude to his murder in Hitler's gas chambers'

comes Villa-Lobos's lighter, rather more sensual (though no less busy) Trio of 1945, an attractive work filled with beguiling themes and smoky harmonies. It is also the longest of the three works and, like its disc companions, is very well performed by these gifted players. The sound quality is extremely vivid. **Rob Cowan**

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Carlos Damas *vn* Anna Tomasik *pf*

Dux Recordings © DUX0696 (52' • DDD)

Expressive and beautiful performances but Kreisler himself is still king



Fritz Kreisler's many short pieces for violin and piano – original compositions, arrangements and stylistic parodies – remain a rich source for violinists searching for encores or

lighter items in a recital programme. Carlos Damas and Anna Tomasik have made an attractive selection of generally less well known pieces, demonstrating how Kreisler gave his charm and individuality to everything he touched. As well as enriching the repertoire, Kreisler issues a challenge to violinists, to play

'Kreisler issues a challenge to violinists, to play these pieces as effectively and as affectingly as he did himself'

these pieces as effectively and as affectingly as he did himself. Damas, with his unforced, expressive tone and his willingness to introduce the subtle slides and rhythmic modifications that animate Kreisler's own playing, has some striking successes. The Chaminade, the Schumann and the *Allegretto à la Boccherini* are all beautifully played, and *Syncopation* finds Damas and Tomasik in a winningly lively, unbuttoned mood. Elsewhere I had some reservations – the Mendelssohn, which Kreisler himself is able to present as a single melodic arch, is here more broken up and so doesn't have the same emotional effect. The outer sections of *La Précieuse* seem too fast to bring out the music's sentimental character. And in *Schön Rosmarin*, it's a shame that Damas didn't dare to be more flexible in tempo and to point the cross-rhythms with more enthusiasm.

There's plenty to enjoy in this recital but I'd urge you to treat it as a supplement to Kreisler's own recordings, not a replacement. **Duncan Druce**

Martinů

String Trio No 1, H136^a. Piano Quartet, H287^b. Chamber Music No 1, H376^c. String Quintet, H164^d. Ensemble Calliopée (Julien Hervé *cl*^{bd} Saskia Lethiec, *acd* Maud Lovett *vn*^s Odile Auboin *va*^{bd} Florent ▶

Watkins sure

Brothers Paul and Huw Watkins will take to Potton Hall in Suffolk this month to record the three Martinů Cello Sonatas for Chandos. Cellist and recently appointed English Chamber Orchestra music director Paul, and pianist and composer Huw have collaborated in the past on a disc of British Cello Sonatas for Nimbus, including works by Bridge, Britten, Goehr and Huw Watkins himself. That album was released in August 2003.

Sonimage launch

New label Sonimage launches this month, billed as a "high quality, classical record label" featuring "the very best of a new generation of artists, as well as already established artists, offering well balanced programmes with distinctive repertoire and excellent sound quality achievable with the latest technology". On the label's first release BBC New Generation Artists the Aronowitz Ensemble perform Vaughan Williams's *Phantasy Quintet*, Huw Watkins's *Sad Steps* (commissioned for the group) and Elgar's *Piano Quintet*, Op 84. The album is the Ensemble's debut recording.

Schubert sonatas

Following his March release on Onyx of Walton's Cello Concerto with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and conductor Jeffrey Tate, Dutch cellist Pieter Wispelwey teamed up with pianist Paolo Giacometti to record a disc of Schubert for the label in July. Using period instruments, the pair performed the *Arpeggione Sonata*, D821, the *Duo Sonata*, D574, and the *Fantasy* in C, D934, all arranged for performance on the cello. Wispelwey's Walton disc was awarded a Gramophone Editor's Choice in the June 2009 issue.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The Mozart Piano Quartet offer some fine Saint-Saëns



Accomplished playing from this group of some wonderful chamber works

Saint-Saëns

Piano Quartets – Op 41; in E. Barcarolle, Op 108
Mozart Piano Quartet (Mark Gothoni *vn*
Hartmut Rohde *va* Peter Hörr *vc* Paul Rivinius *pf*)
Dabringhaus und Grimm © MDG943 1519-6 (58' • DDD)

Saint-Saëns is so well known nowadays for his symphonies, concertos and orchestral works that it is easy to overlook his substantial chamber output. Although he wrote vocal works, from songs to opera, instrumental music was his main love, much against the grain of French musical life in the mid-19th century (a situation not unlike that of his younger contemporary Martucci in Italy). Listen to the sparkling *Scherzo (Poco allegro più tosto moderato)* of the Op 41 Piano Quartet (1875), or the lilting central *Andante* of the earlier E major piece, a three-movement student quartet of considerable imagination completed in 1853 when he was just 18.

It is unclear whether this early Quartet was played in its composer's lifetime; by the time chamber music became more fashionable in French music-making (a trend Saint-Saëns helped pioneer) in the

1880s, it might have seemed too old-fashioned to programme. Yet it is not an immature work except by the standards of Saint-Saëns's later works, not least the Op 41 Quartet, which has a power and brilliance of execution that make it worthy of comparison with Schumann's Op 47.

The Mozart Piano Quartet play both quartets with considerable élan, evoking the spirit of their namesake in Saint-Saëns's beautifully balanced, often gossamer textures. Where power is required, though, as in the outer movements of Op 41 (and, perhaps surprisingly, at the climax of the *Andante maestoso ma con moto*), they respond with assurance. The delightful makeweight of the Barcarolle (1898, rewritten in 1909 with a viola replacing the harmonium of the original) completes a splendid disc.

Guy Rickards

EDITOR'S
CHOICE
GRAMOPHONE
THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

'The Op 41 Quartet has a power and brilliance of execution that make it worthy of comparison with Schumann's Op 47'

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2009/10 season at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

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Yannick Nézet-Séguin
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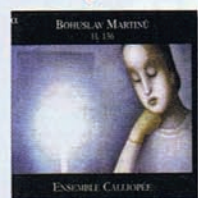
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A sumptuous issue centred on a recently rediscovered masterpiece



Given such a large catalogue of works created in a life that saw him relocate between countries on many occasions in times of political turmoil, it is no wonder so many

of Martinů's works went astray. One of the greatest achievements of the Martinů Institute in Prague has been its remarkable success in recovering seemingly lost works by the Czech master. Time will pass its judgements on the quality of the reclamations but I have no doubt that the First String Trio, Martinů's first Parisian composition, will rank as one of the brightest.

The Czech composer moved to Paris to study with Roussel, informally in the event, writing afterwards how the French master enabled his pupil to release things from within himself. The Trio is the first fruit of these sessions and what a remarkable work it is. In three concise movements, from the first bars of the aggressive opening *Allegro* a new depth is immediately apparent compared to the bulk of

'Most exciting of all is the restrained central Andante, a remarkably assured masterpiece'

his previous compositions. True, the familiar Martinů fingerprints are not yet consistently on view, but the style begins to come into focus during the course of the work. Most exciting of all is the restrained central *Andante*, a remarkably assured masterpiece, succeeded by a brilliant, rollicking finale.

The Trio is numbered 136 in Halbreich's catalogue and is the subject of an interesting documentary, entitled *H136*, on the DVD flipside of disc 2, tracing the circumstances of its rediscovery and assessments of its position in Martinů's oeuvre overall. More telling in this latter respect, however, are the couplings with which it more than stands comparison, none of which ranks among the best known of his chamber output: the vibrant String Quintet written just three years later, the exploratory Piano Quartet (1942) – one of his most searching utterances – and the serene late Chamber Music No 1 (1959). Ensemble Calliopée do the works proud, such that one regrets that the two discs could not have contained further performances, displaying a refinement of tone that this repertoire all too

rarely receives. With exemplary sound from Alpha, this is a self-recommending issue and a gem among the recent crop of Martinů anniversary releases.

Guy Rickards

Mendelssohn • Mozart • Schubert

Mendelssohn String Quartets – No 4, Op 44 No 2; No 3, Op 44 No 1 – Andante espressivo
Mozart String Quartet No 19, 'Dissonance', K465
Schubert String Quartet No 12, 'Quartettssatz', D703
Elias Quartet
 (Sara Bitloch, Donald Grant vs
 Martin Saving vs Marie Bitloch vc)
Wigmore Hall Live ② WHLIVE0028 (79' • DDD)
Recorded live at Wigmore Hall, London, on December 29, 2008

Mozart – selected comparison:

Hagen Qt (DG) 477 6253GB7

Schubert – selected comparisons:

Belcea Qt (3/03) (EMI) 557419-2

Jerusalem Qt (7/08) (HARM) HMC90 1990

The Elias Quartet offer many delights and stand comparison with the greats



Two years ago the Elias bounded into my musical consciousness with a sensational disc of Mendelssohn quartets.

Here was an ensemble not in thrall to streamlining to the nth degree, with four personalities still apparent, yet playing with complete unanimity of purpose – a kind of quartet version of the Australian Chamber Orchestra. Their second disc, caught on the wing at Wigmore Hall at the end of last year, also offers many delights; and the audience is presumably captivated, as it's remarkably silent.

Along with Mendelssohn, Schubert is clearly another great love of the Elias, and in the *Quartettssatz* they revel in the Viennese charm, an aspect that can sometimes get lost in the sheer

'The Elias is one of the most compelling of the younger generation of quartets'

drive of some interpretations, and find time to grow the phrases quite beautifully. This is a version to stand comparison with the outstanding readings from the febrile Belcea and the highly intense Jerusalem Quartet.

In the *Dissonance* the Elias have chosen the most overtly dramatic and groundbreaking of Mozart's quartets, and they relish the emergence of melody from the primeval chromatic swamp. Here there are plentiful examples of their fine musicianship, particularly in the slow movement, where their individuality comes to the fore. As a whole, though, this is not as revelatory as the Hagen's reading, which reveals the anarchic



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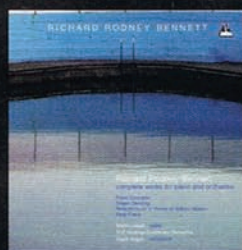
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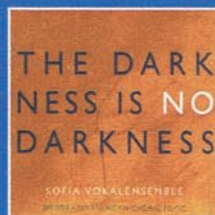


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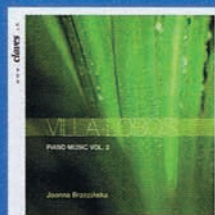


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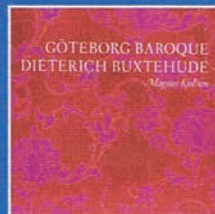
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aspects of the work, the finale in particular, better than any other.

In Mendelssohn's Fourth Quartet, though, we're back to the Elias at their very best, Sara Bitloch's delectable tone leading the way in the extensive first movement and the piece's underlying unease never underplayed. The Mendelssohn encore is a delightful bonus.

The Elias is one of the most compelling of the younger generation of quartets, and despite minor reservations about the Mozart, this disc offers much pleasure and much promise of a glittering future. **Harriet Smith**

Schubert

Allegro, 'Lebensstürme', D947. Fantasie, D940. Rondo, D951. Eight Variations, D813
Waka Hasegawa, Joseph Tong *pf*

Quartz © QTZ2068 (65' • DDD)

A great new recording of some of Schubert's most inspired piano duets



Inspiration flourishes under pressure. He must have known that he had limited time left to him, for the first three works here come from the same miraculous last year of

Schubert's life (1828). The Allegro and Rondo, it is speculated, were intended as the first and last movements of a sonata. *Lebensstürme* ("Storms of Life" – the apt title is not Schubert's but his publisher Diabelli's) is in sonata form featuring three highly contrasted ideas; the Rondo, written a month later, is lighter in character but with the same melodic fecundity and structural breadth. Following these is the greatest of all Schubert's works for piano duet, the divinely inspired Fantasie. Hasegawa and Tong complete their programme with the earlier (1824) Variations in A flat.

These latter two pieces were played by Richter and Britten at Aldeburgh in 1965 and 1966 respectively – treasurable performances of course (Decca 8/00), but this new recording yields nothing to them in terms of spontaneity

'They have been given a superlative recorded sound which captures in a realistic way their rich, cushioned tone'

and the rapt intimacy so essential to *Hausmusik* of this kind. In addition, Hasegawa and Tong benefit from the absence of the Aldeburgh asthmatics and the less-than-ideal acoustic of Jubilee Hall where the Fantasie was performed. They have been given a superlative recorded sound (Champs Hill, Coldwaltham in Sussex) which captures in a realistic way their rich, cushioned tone, one that caresses the ears whether in such dramatic passages as the

Fantasie's *Allegro vivace* or the haunting lyricism of D813's third variation. I should have liked different tracks for each section of the Fantasie and Variations – my one complaint.

Jeremy Nicholas

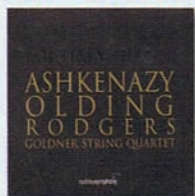
'Rare Rachmaninov'

Mussorgsky The Fair at Sorochintsy – Gopak (arr Rachmaninov)^{bd} **Rachmaninov** Deux Morceaux de salon, Op 6^{bd}. Romance^{bd}. String Quartets^c – No 1; No 2. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 (arr Press)^{bd}. All Nature Sings^{ab}. A Prayer^{ab}

^aJoan Rodgers *sop* ^bVladimir Ashkenazy *pf*
^cGoldner Quartet (^dDene Olding, Dimity Hall *vns* Irina Morozova *va* Julian Smiles *vc*)

Sydney Symphony © SSO200901 (55' • DDD)

A songful selection of Rachmaninov rarities offers much to enjoy



Only two actual songs are included here, a pair of sacred settings dating from 1916 (very late in Rachmaninov's life as a song-writer) sung with great fervour by the

admirable Joan Rodgers. But the idea of song runs through much else in a collection of rarities bound to interest all lovers of Rachmaninov. Several of the items are actually entitled "Romance", *romans* being the French-inspired

'The idea of song runs through much of this collection of rarities bound to interest all lovers of Rachmaninov'

Russian word for an art-song of the kind that delighted 19th-century St Petersburg salons. The A minor piece for violin and piano seems to date from the 1880s, and is pleasantly in the salon manner of Rachmaninov's admired Tchaikovsky; the Op 6 *Morceaux de salon* consist of an impassioned violin song and an invigorating piece of gypsy fiddling; and the first of two surviving movements of a string quartet (the second is a quick-witted piece of near-Borodin) has all Rachmaninov's mature melodic elegance. The much-arranged *Vocalise*, of course, began life as a wordless song. The recordings have a suitably intimate, vivid presence, as if the excellent Olding and Ashkenazy were addressing their gathering personally, and with a smile.

The Second String Quartet is a more substantial piece of work, or would be if Rachmaninov had completed it. He left part of only two movements, and these have been completed by editors. The *Andante* is particularly interesting, using, unexpectedly for Rachmaninov, a six-note ground bass on which he builds a powerful structure that, as the insert note suggests, has something of the intensity of *The Isle of the Dead*. One almost expects him to find room for his beloved "Dies irae" theme.

Olding and Ashkenazy have a lot of fun with Rachmaninov's arrangement of Mussorgsky's *Gopak* to round off a disc of real curiosities.

John Warrack

'Souvenirs'

Angulo De Aires Antiguos **Boudounis** Elena's Tsifteteli **Diaz** Polka. Vals triste **Fampas** Sousta **Kioulaphides** Differencias **Hadjidakis** Mother and Sister. Kemal **Kaufmann** Burletta, Op 62. Mikota **Dragomirna**, Op 63 **Leonardi** Souvenir de Sicile **Muñoz** El Duende **Nawata** Sakura **Ortiz** Patas'd'hilo **Pino** El Fusagasugueño. Valle del Cauca **A Stephens** Mount Fuji **Tadic** Walk Dance **Theodorakis** Where has my boy flown to? **Zambrano** Suite Venezolana **Zerega** Souvenir de Bovio

Alison Stephens *mandl* Craig Ogden *gtr*

Chandos © CHAN10563 (80' • DDD)

Alison Stephens will be donating all her royalties from this CD/digital release to Macmillan Cancer Support

A beautifully performed disc that is brimming with fun and fire



Guitarist Graig Ogden and mandolin-player Alison Stephens have been performing together for 10 years now, and to celebrate have released "Souvenirs", a disc comprising solos and duets from Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Latin America, Spain and Japan.

Many of the pieces have been in the duo's repertoire for some years, and indeed the unusual and eclectic nature of the programme can be traced back to the time of their first disc together, "Music from the Novels of Louis de Bernières", and of subsequent themed concerts, many of which featured Bernières himself reciting poetry.

"Souvenirs" is a seriously fun disc: fun because of the festive nature of much of the music and of the obvious musical chemistry between Ogden and Stephens; serious because of the outstanding artistry and technical proficiency displayed by the two artists. Whether it's in the lively *Fiesta Criolla* that bookends the three more reflective movements of José Antonio Zambrano's *Suite Venezolana* or the beautiful "Mother and Sister", an arrangement of a song by Greek composer Manos Hadjidakis, Ogden and Stephens bring out the distinctive qualities of their respective instruments while exploiting to the full the potential for colour and drama within an ensemble context.

Equally engaging are solos such as the wonderfully percussive *Elena's Tsifteteli*, written by Evangelos Boudounis for Greek classical guitarist Elena Papandreou and played by Ogden with real fire, and Juan Carlos Muñoz's *El Duende*, a genuine flamenco piece for mandolin in which Stephens really lets her hair down.

The pairing of guitar and mandolin isn't especially unusual; but listening to "Souvenirs", there can be no doubt that what Ogden and Stephens do with it is. **William Yeoman**

Instrumental

Hamelin's Haydn • Simon Holt solo • John McCabe's English piano recital

JC Bach

Six Keyboard Sonatas, Op 17 T341/1

Sophie Yates *hpd*

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0762 (68' • DDD)

Sophie Yates makes the most of a periodically inspired set of pieces



What would his father have made of Johann Christian Bach, I wonder? His successful career in London, his influence on the young Mozart, all speak of an able and

charismatic figure. But of all of Sebastian's famous sons, JC appears to have travelled farthest from his roots. The six sonatas recorded here were intended for the amateur keyboard-players of London and beyond, many of whom no doubt studied with him personally. Sophie Yates's notes make no exaggerated claims for this music, which is perhaps just as well. The first four sonatas seem barely to scratch the surface of the style's affective potential: pleasant but undemanding melodies succeed each other, with little seemingly to tax either performer or listener. (The cameo appearance of Roger Whittaker's "I've got to leave old Durham town" in the slow movement of the D major sonata is a weird twist, and for this reviewer, strangely apposite.) It seems a shame that the composer died too early to witness or absorb Haydn's arrival on London's musical scene.

Lest you think I'm judging him unfairly, the last two works of the set raise the game

'Yates' playing has the lightness and wit without which the point of the music would, I suspect, be entirely lost'

considerably, both technically and musically, as Yates herself points out. While this is hardly the most involving keyboard music ever committed to disc, Yates is an engaging advocate: registral choices are intelligent, making the most of the "orchestral" sound that periodically underlies Bach's writing, and her playing has the lightness and wit without which the point of the music would, I suspect, be entirely lost. Given the distinction of her back catalogue, it would be childish not to trust her in this new venture.

Fabrice Fitch

JS Bach

French Suite No 6, BWV817. Fughetta, BWV961.

Fugues – BWV952; BWV953. Partita No 2, BWV826.

Preludes and Fughettas – BWV899; BWV900.

Preludes and Fugues – BWV895; BWV902a. Prelude, BWV999. Nine Preludes (Pieces from Clavier-Büchlein for WF Bach) – Praeambulum, BWV924; Prelude, BWV925; Prelude, BWV926; Praeambulum, BWV927; Prelude, BWV928; Praeambulum, BWV930; Prelude, BWV931. Six Little Preludes, BWV933–38. Five Preludes, BWV939–43. Two-Part Inventions, BWV772–86. Three-Part Inventions, 'Sinfonias', BWV787–801

Andrea Bacchetti *pf*

Dynamic © 2 CDS629-1/2 (150' • DDD)

A considered Bach recital that sometimes scales the heights



Judging from past releases and the present double-CD set, Andrea Bacchetti has concocted a Bach style based upon deliberate and drawn-out tempi, rounded, vocally oriented phrasing,

and a way of insidiously shifting *legato* and detached articulation that manages to make everything sound connected, if sometimes by a thread (the E flat Sinfonia and B flat Invention, for example). He loves to apply gradual *diminuendos* at cadence points, much as a seasoned, even-tempered driver approaches stop lights. Long trills boast considerable polish and sheen, along with ornaments that hover around the grey area between imaginative and quirky (the D minor and F major Inventions). He delineates the E major Sinfonia in muted half-tints, yet with more artful pedalling than in Till Fellner's recent, relatively blurry interpretation (ECM, 9/09). At worst Bacchetti can be over-emphatic and ponderous like a Rosalyn Tureck wannabe (the B major Invention, the B minor Sinfonia, the E major French Suite's Gigue), or, in the C minor Partita's Rondeau and Capriccio, bogged down by self-conscious, flow-impeding agogic stresses. However, throughout the little Preludes and Fugues, Bacchetti allows his luminous sonority to soar without pressure or fuss. Listen to him work his tonal magic in the A minor Prelude, BWV931: the music takes less than a minute, yet the pianist says it all. **Jed Distler**

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas –

No 28, Op 101; No 29, 'Hammerklavier', Op 106

Sverre Larsen *pf*

CD Klassisk © CDK1013 (64' • DDD)

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas –

No 30, Op 109; No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111

Sverre Larsen *pf*

CD Klassisk © CDK1020 (65' • DDD)

Clarity and lyricism in a capable traversal of the last five sonatas



The straightforward musicianship and beautiful singing tone that distinguished Sverre Larsen's earlier recording of Bach's Partitas (Classico, 4/06) make themselves felt throughout the last five Beethoven sonatas, especially in the composer's most lyrical and poetic passages. Listeners will notice, for example, the Op 101 first movement's

cogent voice-leading and the third movement's magically effected transition into the finale, the Op 110 first movement's songful eloquence and well articulated left-hand work, the Op 106 *Adagio*'s steady and sustained deliberation, or the exceptional tonal control with which Larsen shapes the long chains of trills in Op 109 and Op 111's concluding variation movements. Ideally one would want greater contrast between the Op 109 first movement's tempo shifts or, in the Op 106 and Op 111 first movements, harder-hitting accents and more dramatic thrust than the pianist seems capable of delivering. Furthermore, next to the astute timing and lithe touch of Richard Goode (Nonesuch, 3/94) in the *scherzos*, Larsen comes off sounding relatively sober, four-square and uneventful. Yet the *Hammerklavier*'s fugue is as clear and energetic as the catalogue's best versions, and avoids the slightest slowing down as it progresses. The recorded sound conveys the realism and impact of a small concert hall.

Jed Distler

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas –

No 30, Op 109; No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111

Cédric Pescia *pf*

Claves © 50-2903 (64' • DDD)

Selected comparisons:

Goode (3/94) (NONE) 7559 79328-2

Lewis (6/08) (HARM) HMC90 1909/11

Schnabel (EMI) 562880-2

A pianist who underplays the drama of Beethoven's last three sonatas



Cédric Pescia, winner of the Gina Bachauer competition, has previously set his recording sights high with the *Goldberg Variations*. Now he turns his attention

to Beethoven's final triumvirate. His interpretations seem to come from a slightly later style, however. In the finale of Op 109, for instance, the quiet nobility of Beethoven's variation theme – oh what a nightmare that is to voice – has a certain choppiness due to an excess of *rubato*, which disturbs the underlying pulse (such a key feature as the variations intensify). Much of the expression in these works comes out of a minute observation of the score, never more so than in the finale of Op 110. In its extraordinary recitative for the right hand, including that grief-stricken passage on a single note – not used to such emotive effect again until Chopin in his 15th Prelude – Pescia's overstated emoting cheapens the effect of a tragedy-laden torpor.

Of course this is some of the most challenging music in the piano repertoire, but it seems to me that Pescia isn't yet sure of what he wants to do with the music. It's as if he isn't content to let Beethoven's often very simple building materials – the opening diminished seventh of Op 111 being a case in point – and their subsequent intricate development, stand on their own. As a result, he underplays the drama of Beethoven's raw juxtapositions of contrasting ideas – taming the outlandish middle movement of Op 110.

When comparing Pescia with the masterly and utterly empathetic readings of Goode, Lewis and Schnabel (to take but three), his shortcomings, sadly, become still more evident.

Harriet Smith

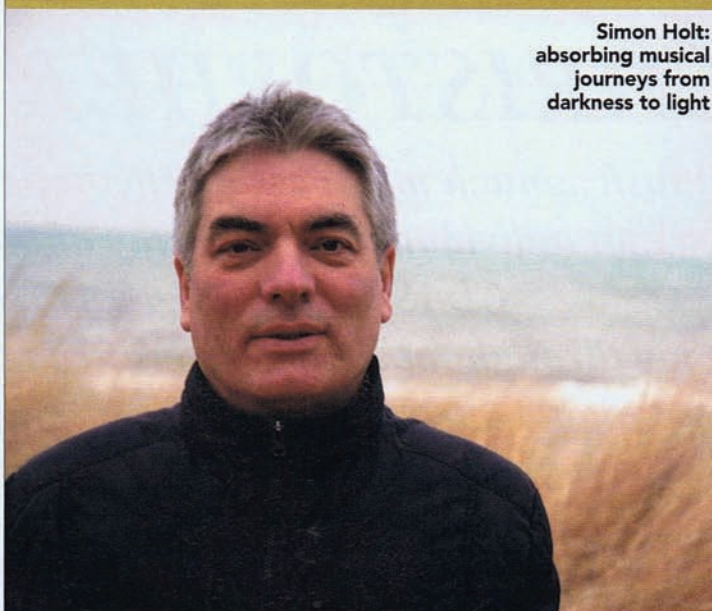
Brahms • Schumann

Brahms Klavierstücke, Op 118
Schumann Papillons, Op 2. Waldszenen, Op 82
 Dejan Lazic pf
 Channel Classics © CCSSA27609
 (68' • DDD/DSD)

Papillons – selected comparisons:
 Richter (3/93*) (EMI) 217411-2
 Perahia (SONY) SMK89714
Waldszenen – selected comparison:
 Richter (DG) 447 440-2GDR
Brahms – selected comparisons:
 Vogt (5/04) (EMI) 557543-2
 Angelich (4/07) (VIRG) 379302-2

Lazic illuminates the contradictions, with a Waldszenen well worth hearing

That Dejan Lazic is a musician full of ideas and refreshing individuality is not in doubt, and the programming here, juxtaposing early and late Schumann with late Brahms, is illuminating. *Waldszenen* comes off particularly well, capturing ▶



Simon Holt: absorbing musical journeys from darkness to light



Simon Holt's hallmark Hispanic-hued expressionism seduces once again

Holt

'A Book of Colours'
 Tauromaquia. A Book of Colours.
 Black Lanterns. Klop's Last Bite. Nigredo.
 Rolf Hind pf
 NMC © NMCD128 (69' • DDD)

To call a piano composition "a book of colours" does rather underline the black-and-white basis of the instrument and, given the rich textural imagination of Simon Holt's music for various ensembles and for orchestra, a disc of nothing but piano music might leave you feeling that something essential is missing. Fortunately, this programme is substantial and varied enough to prove satisfying – colouristically as well as conceptually – in its own terms.

That's because it gives a good work-out to the most distinctive aspect of Holt's take on musical expressionism – the Spanish flavour that results from allusions to writers and painters like Lorca and Goya, with Picasso, Miró and others in the background. Moreover, as is very clear in "Some Distant Chimes" from *A Book of Colours*, and also in *Nigredo*, Holt's Spanishness is never more seductive than when touches of impressionistic understatement weave their way into the music's steadily, subtly evolving forms.

Holt cultivates a surrealistic strain in the concentrated musical comedy of *Klop's Last Bite*, 11 tiny movements chronicling the lethal confrontation between a complacent bedbug and a mad flea. If the title hints at Beckett-style tragedy, the music shows that wit and an abrasive contemporary style are not incompatible. The aura of menace is altogether more disturbing in the other works, however: perhaps too unremittingly so in the early *Tauromaquia* and *Black Lanterns*, but totally gripping and richly nuanced in the 16-minute *Nigredo*. The CD's title links alchemy with Jungian psychology, and it's the importance of transformation to both that gives Holt his musical cue for an absorbing journey from – it would seem – darkness to light. Rolf Hind is the perfect interpreter throughout and the Pottin Hall recording is of demonstration quality. **Arnold Whittall**

INTERVIEW

Simon Holt

This was supposed to be all the pieces I'd written for piano, but I got the timings wrong so *The Book of Shadow* had to be a download. But every piano piece I've written from 1980 to the most recent, *Klop's Last Bite*, is here. I haven't actually written a piano piece for around five years so it was good to hear them again.

Usually I only hear my piano works one at a time in recital. To hear them all in quick succession on that remarkable piano at Pottin Hall was quite an experience. It occurred to me that they all feel like me. Even the very early ones. I'm still doing similar things to what I was doing in 1980 – perhaps I'm not very adventurous! But there's a core of ideas that I've stuck to and they've been growing ever since.

I'm a pianist and so when I play notes on that instrument they feel personal. That aspect of it interests me, getting to something that is at the centre of my thinking. I'm not sure what that is. Which is why I write the pieces, to clarify, because most things don't make sense to me at all.

Although there are recordings I love, I generally don't compose for recordings and I don't even listen to the CDs usually – I tend to give them away. On the other hand they are a great way to bring people to the music, so they can listen in their own time.

Rolf Hind and I have known each other since the 1992 organ festival in Bolton, where he played my *Tauromaquia*. I like the way his playing is so un-English. It has that Spanish creative spirit of *duende*, that extra fire which can be quite frightening when at full tilt, never neat and tidy. There's something monumental about it. I've always searched for that. For that matter, contemporary English music gets a much better reception in Spain than at home. In Madrid there are queues around the block for my concerts!

Interview by
 James Inverne

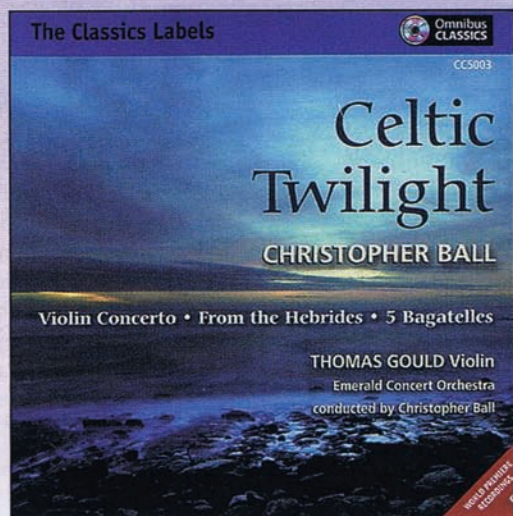
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has been welcomed as being in the traditional English style of Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Finzi, but with its own individual voice and personal orchestral sound.

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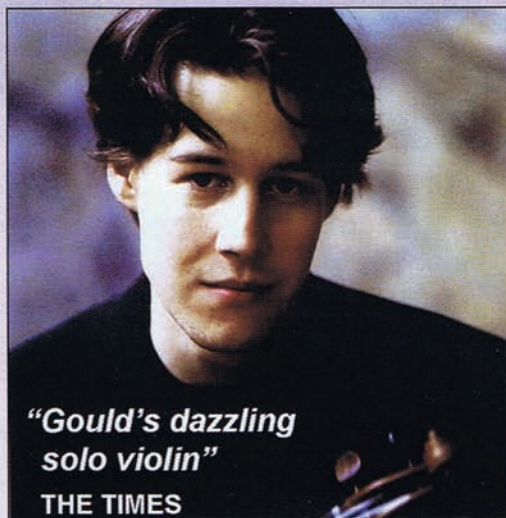
clearly displays these characteristics of mood and melody with its range of emotions from the poetic to the passionate.

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THE FIVE BAGATELLES

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the fantasy of Schumann's fleeting images and moods very well, particularly in "Einsame Blumen" and "Freundliche Landschaft", the latter more mercurial

than in Richter's compelling traversal. There's a sense of unbridled exuberance in "Jagdlied" too. Occasionally in the slower pieces Lazic can sound a touch deliberate alongside Richter, particularly in the mysterious "Verrufene Stelle".

That deliberateness tips over into self-consciousness in his rather curious reading of *Papillons*. Again, his sound is very appealing, and there is much felicitous phrasing where fleetness is required. But in slower numbers Lazic can become portentous – Nos 3 and 5 in particular and in the coda of the Finale. This also has the effect of making the work sound excessively sectionalised – very much at odds with Richter, Cortot (EMI – nla) and Perahia.

Brahms's Op 118 *Klavierstücke*, even when turbulent, such as in the very opening, have a certain introspection. It's this apparent contradiction that makes them such a challenge for pianists, and an aspect that Lazic seems to be trying almost too hard to convey. In No 2, for instance, his desynchronisation between the hands unbalances the work's inherent classicism. Angelich is simpler here, and more effective. And in No 3, Lazic lessens the potency of its driving rhythms (so well realised by Vogt) with an excess of *rubato*. This is a pity for there are also moments of beauty, such as the opening passage of No 4, or the trill-laden middle section of No 5, where Lazic's touch is perfect. So, something of a mixed bag, though *Waldszenen* is well worth hearing.

Harriet Smith

Chopin • Liszt • Schumann

Chopin Ballade No 3, Op 47. Nocturne No 2, Op 9 No 2. Waltzes – No 7, Op 64 No 2; No 8, Op 64 No 3; No 14, Op *posth*. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35
Liszt Polish Songs, S480 – No 1, Maiden's Wish (after Chopin); No 6, 'Die Heimkehr' (after Chopin)
Schumann Carnival, Op 9. Der Kontrabandiste, Op 74 No 10
Sergey Rachmaninov *pf*
Naxos Historical mono © 8 112020 (69' • ADD)
From RCA Victor originals, recorded 1925-42
Rachmaninov the pianist in dazzling performances, superbly remastered



How fascinating and instructive to return to legendary performances from the past, to find confirmation of greatness here, a lessening of enthusiasm there, to raise or lower an eyebrow. Here is a reminder and a

remembrance of a matchless idiosyncrasy and mastery, particularly when discs dating from 1925-42 are so superbly remastered by Ward Marston (a vast improvement on RCA's long-deleted 10-disc set of the complete recordings). Try this great pianist in Chopin's E flat Nocturne, Op 9 No 2, played in the style of the greatest Russian singers, with a melting *cantabile* and with a freedom and *rubato* that can make even the ever-elfin Cherkassky sound sober by comparison. The Op 64 Waltz in A flat dances with a gossamer lightness while the Third Ballade seems improvised on the spot. Today, Rachmaninov's operatic treatment of the Funeral March from the Second Sonata (his explosive return of the theme after the central Elysium) and his "winds whistling over graveyards" alternative to Chopin's prescribed *sotto voce* in the finale may seem over-free, aberrations to be frowned on in our more puritan times. Yet even here you are conscious of a fierce musical integrity, one that scorns mere cleverness or difference for its own sake. The *Scherzo* from the same sonata has all of Rachmaninov's astonishing propulsion and pungent rhythmic drive; and in the final pages of Schumann's *Carnaval* the dancers are whirled into near oblivion. Rachmaninov could be gruff, tender, mordant (he includes "Sphinxes", written in order to be ignored), dazzling, confiding and so much more. This is a superb first volume in what promises to be an invaluable series.

Bryce Morrison

Elgar

Falstaff, Op 68 (arr Karg-Elert). Six Pomp and Circumstance Marches (arr Owen Norris)

David Owen Norris *pf*

Elgar Editions © EEC009 (0' • DDD)

Piano transcriptions of Elgar favourites played with artistry – a tonic indeed



David Owen Norris has made a terrific job of transcribing the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches, even to the extent of realising some previously unknown sketches for No 6 dating from c1910 (discovered at Broadheath in 2007, the year after Anthony Payne's orchestral completion). Not only is

'How good it is to hear No 1's "big tune" allowed to sing out as the touchingly expressive inspiration it actually is'

the actual piano-writing wholly idiomatic and (by the sound of it) highly rewarding to play, the finished article makes for intensely refreshing listening, as repertoire you thought you knew inside out undergoes a "spring clean", its harmonic and contrapuntal inner workings

laid bare as seldom before. At the same time, such is Norris's swaggering conviction, appealing variety of colour and tasteful deployment of *rubato*, that at no time did I feel I was missing out on the extra ear-tickling textural variety or sheer physicality of the orchestral originals. That's some achievement – and how good it is to hear No 1's "big tune" allowed to sing out as the touchingly expressive inspiration it actually is, its essential dignity and restraint mercifully intact. I also like the glinting mischief Norris finds in No 2, even more so the menace he locates in its dark-hued C minor successor.

It's a similar tale in Siegfried Karg-Elert's unpublished 1914 transcription of the symphonic study *Falstaff*. Once again, Norris's pianism is past praise in its scrupulous poise, immaculate touch and attention to dynamic nuance. What's more, he also displays an acute intellectual and emotional understanding of what is one of Elgar's most keenly proportioned, compassionate achievements (the closing pages are deeply moving). Here is artistry of a very high order, and the recording – splendidly lustrous and wholly truthful in timbre – is worthy of it. An unexpected tonic, this, and very warmly recommended.

Andrew Achenbach

Haydn

Piano Sonatas – HobXVI/26; HobXVI/31; HobXVI/33; HobXVI/34; HobXVI/35; HobXVI/39; HobXVI/42; HobXVI/48; HobXVI/49. Sonata 'Un piccolo divertimento' (Variations), HobXVII/6. Fantasia, 'Capriccio', HobXVII/4

Marc-André Hamelin *pf*

Hyperion © 2 CDA67710 (153' • DDD)

Hamelin is witty and brilliant – often with a refreshing approach to Haydn



Mark-André Hamelin's second set of Haydn sonatas confirms the adulation that greeted his first. Yet, if anything, it is even more dextrous, magical and enriching.

Time and again he reminds you how in the finest pianist's hands technique and musicianship become indivisible considerations. As Rudolf Serkin put it, "You can never have enough technique", in the sense that only when all possible practical problems have been resolved can you be free to concentrate unimpeded on a composer's musical essence. More specifically, Hamelin exhibits a coruscating wit and brilliance known to few pianists. When have you heard dotted rhythms more sprucely articulated than in No 35's finale, or wondered how terms such as *vivace* can take on a whole new meaning given such rapier reflexes and musical sheen?

Hamelin is superbly alive to the Fantasia's fits and starts, to its skittish changes of pace and direction, and the 26th Sonata's finale flashes



KIM KASHKASHIAN

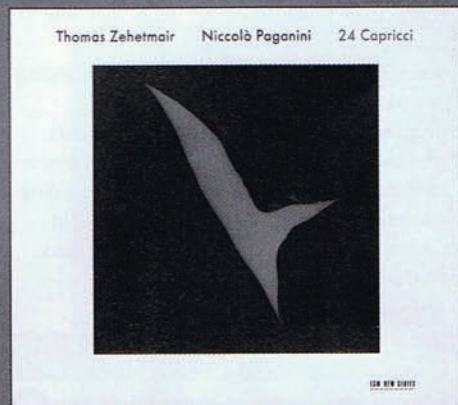
Neharót

Betty Olivero, Tigran Mansurian, Eitan Steinberg

Kim Kashkashian: viola
Munich Chamber Orchestra, Alexander Liebreich
Robyn Schulkowsky: percussion
Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Gil Rose
Kuss Quartet

Whatever music Kashkashian plays, the scores always seem to speak and to sing. On "Neharót" the Armenian-American violist traces underlying connections between three contemporary composers from Israel and Armenia. Although alluding to old laments, songs of the Middle East and Hasidic melody respectively, the works are firmly rooted in the musical present.

ECM 2065 CD 476 3281



THOMAS ZEHETMAIR

Nicolò Paganini: 24 Capricci for solo violin

For Thomas Zehetmair, Paganini's Caprices are a collection of improvised character pieces rather than calculated firework displays, encompassing not only romantic abysses of the soul but also the sweetness of Italian bel canto. Zehetmair's interpretation is characterised by hitherto unheard colouristic shading, superb phrasing and a most audacious physical approach.

ECM 2124 CD 476 3318

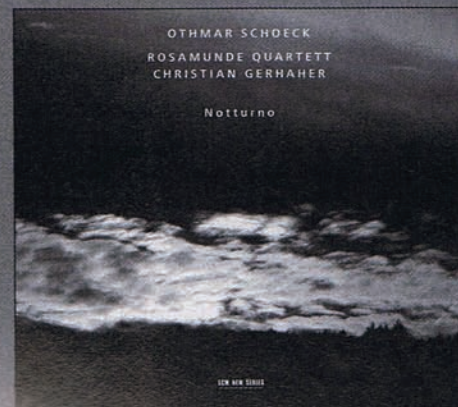


ANDRÁS SCHIFF

Johann Sebastian Bach: Six Partitas BWV 825-830

Following his highly acclaimed complete Beethoven Schiff returns to Bach: In autumn 2007 the pianist made a live recording of the six Partitas, music which, for Bach, represented a unique synthesis of the venerable suite tradition. Clarity, beauty of sound and a rare understanding of musical proportions confirm Schiff's reputation as one of the leading Bach interpreters.

ECM 2001/02 2-CD set 476 6991



Released on 5 October:

CHRISTIAN GERHAER / ROSAMUNDE QUARTET

Othmar Schoeck: Notturmo op. 47

"Here is a composer who deserves rediscovery", says Heinz Holliger of Othmar Schoeck (1886-1957). Christian Gerhaer, one of today's foremost lieder baritones, and the Rosamunde Quartet offer an impressive plea for one of the Swiss composer's most personal works, his "Notturmo" of 1933, based on poetry by Nikolaus Lenau and Gottfried Keller.

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PROPER NOTE

past in an unbelievable 45 seconds. True, you might take issue with his coolly flowing *Andante* in the F minor Variations but there is no lack of minor-key drama in the final pages, and you may well end up feeling that Hamelin's is a refreshing alternative to, say, Demidenko's audaciously slow tempo ("live" and also on Hyperion, 1/94⁸). Again, the E minor (34th) Sonata's restless patterning is thrown off with never a hair out of place, and the concluding Sonata in C (No 48) is a marvel of precision, grace and fluency. Hyperion's sound and presentation could hardly be more immaculate, leaving me to pray that Hamelin will continue his Haydn series when not effortlessly scaling the heights of cloudier Romantic repertoire.

Bryce Morrison

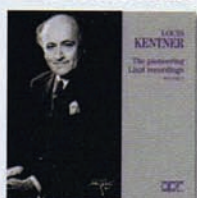
Liszt

'The Pioneering Liszt Recordings, Vol 2' Soirées de Vienne, S427. La campanella, S141 No 3. Octaves, S140 No 2. La chasse. Etude de concert No 2, 'La leggerezza', S144. Gnomenreigen, S145 No 2. Liebestraum, S541 No 3. Transcendental Study, 'Feux follets', S139 No 5. Venezia e Napoli - Gondoliera, S162 No 1. Tarantella, S162 No 3. RW - Venezia, S201. En rêve, S207. Csárdás macabre, S224. Les patineurs (Meyerbeer), S414 No 2

Louis Kentner *pf*

APR  APR5614 (77' • ADD)

Riches galore from a pianist who kept Liszt at the heart of his repertoire



First of all, hats off to Bryan Crimp and Malcolm Binns who have made these incomparable Liszt performances available on CD.

Following on from APR's first volume (2/97), this second reminds you that in his heyday Louis Kentner was the most stylish, witty and engaging of all Liszt pianists. Excellently transferred from 78s dating from 1939-59, this selection ranges from Liszt's early exuberance to the grim-faced austerity of his final years, and throughout you will hear playing of a peerless scintillation, patrician command and a poetic engagement known to few pianists.

With the disc subtitled "The Pioneering Liszt Recordings", APR makes it clear that Kentner was a tireless propagandist for Liszt's genius in

'Kentner was a tireless propagandist for Liszt's genius in the face of lofty scorn and indifference'

the face of lofty scorn and indifference from the musical (unmusical?) establishment of the time. Liszt was always at the heart of his vast, all-encompassing repertoire and his affection is evident in his many scintillating flourishes and additions to the score, all gloriously within the style. The *Csárdás macabre*, in particular, crackles ►

Rogé records

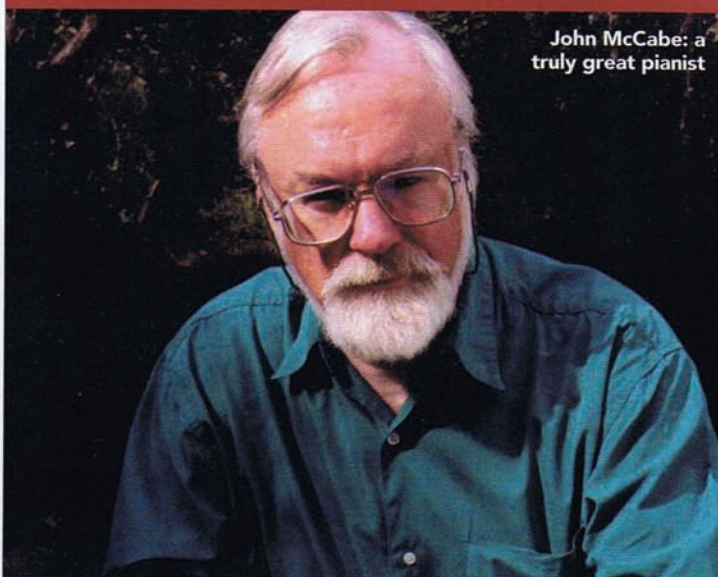
Gramophone Award-winner Pascal Rogé is currently adding to his Debussy piano works collection for Onyx. Recording sessions for Vols 4 and 5 in the series began in mid-July and will be completed during November 15-18. Vol 4 is for solo piano, while Vol 5 is for piano four hands with Rogé's wife Ami Rogé, and includes arrangements of *La mer*, the Symphony in B minor and the *Petite suite*, in addition to *Swan Lake* and *The Flying Dutchman*.

Re Couperin

During April, Academy of Ancient Music director Richard Egarr recorded Vol 1 of an intended four-disc series devoted to the complete solo keyboard suites of Louis Couperin. Taking place at Air Studios, Lyndhurst Hall, London, the sessions included approximately half of the suites and chaconnes. Recording is due for completion in February 2010 when a release date for the complete set will be decided. Egarr's busy recording schedule has already this year produced albums of Handel's 12 Solo Sonatas, Op 1 (May) and Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos* (March) - each with the Academy of Ancient Music for Harmonia Mundi.

Bezuidenhout

In the month following Richard Egarr's Couperin sessions, London's Air Studios provided the recording venue for another Harmonia Mundi keyboard project - this time a disc of Mozart works performed by South African keyboard-player Kristian Bezuidenhout. Included on the disc were the Sonata No 15, K533, Sonata No 17, K570, Fantasy, K475, and Variations, K455, all played on a Derek Adlam copy of a Walter fortepiano. The recording is due for release in spring 2010.



John McCabe: a truly great pianist

PETER THOMPSON




A fitting showcase for English piano music and for one of Britain's finest pianists

'An English Recital'

Bax Sonata No 4 - Allegretto quasi andante Britten Night-Piece (Notturmo) Holst Two Northumbrian Folk tunes. Two Pieces Ireland Sonatina Joubert Dance Suite, Op 21 Moeran Bank Holiday Vaughan Williams Hymn-Tune Prelude on 'Song 13' by Gibbons. The Lake in the Mountains. Suite of Six Short Pieces Warlock Five Folksong Preludes

John McCabe *pf*

BMS  BMS103CDH (70' • AAD)

Released in celebration of John McCabe's 70th birthday, this splendid recital is a timely reminder of what we will soon be missing, for McCabe announced earlier this year his intention to retire from the concert platform. The present disc, recorded mostly in 1972, is typical of his enterprising programme-planning, with the familiar and not-so-familiar rubbing shoulders on equal terms.

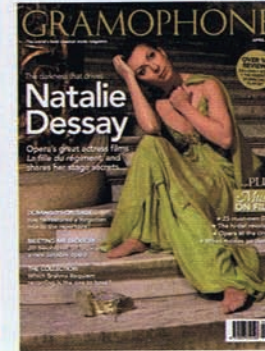
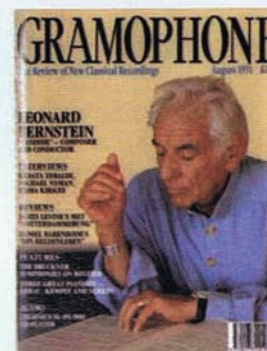
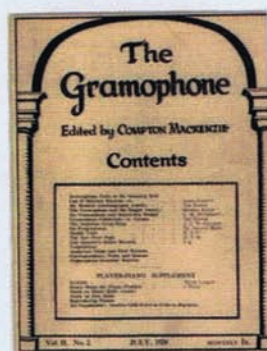
Whereas some pianists impress through force of virtuosity, McCabe exceptionally brings the composer's insights to bear on whatever he performs. Vaughan Williams's Hymn-Tune Prelude (1928) impresses through its calm, strong polyphony, whereas his *Lake in the Mountains* (1947, extracted from his film score *The 49th Parallel*) is a beautifully rendered miniature tone-picture. His Suite, published in 1921, may be a teaching aid but is a splendid concert item in its own right. Of the two Holst pairs, the Nocturne and Jig (Two Pieces, 1930-32, composed for his daughter Imogen) are the weightier, given enjoyably robust performances here; but the Northumbrian Folk tunes simply delight.

McCabe takes in his stride not only the folksy soundscapes in Warlock's masterly Folksong Preludes (1918) but also the vigorous, percussive sections of Ireland's brilliant Sonatina (1927) or Joubert's Dance Suite (1958). Bringing out some surprisingly Baxian qualities in the central *Quasi lento* of the Ireland, McCabe moves to the real thing in a movement from Bax's Fourth Sonata (1934). By complete contrast, he produces the best account I have heard of Britten's then-still-new *Night-Piece* (1963, recorded in 1968 Pye sessions), framed between Moeran's slight but enjoyable *Bank Holiday* (1925) and Joubert's electrifying suite. The re-engineered sound is fine throughout - a fitting testimonial to a truly great pianist. **Guy Rickards**

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with a virtuoso fire and elaboration unknown to the composer, its stark and baleful character generously ornamented and extended. Elsewhere you will have an unalloyed joy in music-making, a Third *Liebestraum* that "sings" and shimmers with all of Kentner's rich *cantabile*, and Etudes as magical as any on record. Finally, the *Les patineurs* paraphrase brings down the curtain on one marvel after another. Here the skaters take to the ice with dazzling aplomb, spinning and pirouetting through one giddy arabesque after another, the only regret being that the performance was marginally cut for accommodation on 78s. Otherwise whatever sparkles and enchants is here in super-abundance together with a reminder of Liszt's prophetic and dark-hued final years. **Bryce Morrison**

Prokofiev

Piano Sonatas – No 2, Op 14; No 4, Op 29. Ten Pieces from *Romeo & Juliet*, Op 75. Toccata, Op 11
Bobby Chen *pf*
 Somm New Horizons © SOMMCD089
 (71' • DDD)

A Prokofiev recital that may just be a little short on feistiness and pep



Bobby Chen's lightweight and predominantly lyrical Prokofiev recital provides a pleasing alternative to other bleaker, more percussive performances.

He eases gracefully into the Second Sonata's haunting second subject and finds a suitably dark colouring for the *Andante*, making it very much the expressive centre of the work. But the *Scherzo* is tame for Prokofiev's early scrubbing-brush style and bad-boy image, and in the finale's cartoon-like caperings he keeps drama and satire safely at arm's length. You won't meet the knife-edge virtuosity of, say, Gary Graffman in his early Sony disc; and in the Fourth Sonata (most enigmatically Russian of the sonatas and music

'In the finale's cartoon-like caperings Chen keeps the drama and satire safely at arm's length'

indelibly associated with Sviatoslav Richter) you miss an altogether fuller sense of engagement. In *Romeo & Juliet* he shows a feistiness and pep in "The Young Juliet" missing elsewhere, where he could surely have sounded more characterful and less "on pilot". His Toccata is fast rather than furious but, despite a few tight corners, is a dextrous success.

For a more vivid view of *Romeo & Juliet* readers should seek out Andrei Gavrilov's pungent if long-deleted EMI disc or Cristina Ortiz's deft and affectionate account (also on EMI – both are ripe for reissue). Bobby Chen's

sleeve includes glowing recommendations from Sir Neville Marriner and Lord Menuhin, and he has been well recorded.

Bryce Morrison

Vivaldi

The Four Seasons, Op 8 Nos 1-4 (arr anon/Biegel)
 Mandolin Concerto, RV425. Lute Concerto, RV93
 (both arr Gentile)

Jeffrey Biegel *pf*
 Naxos © 8 570031 (61' • DDD)

Familiar music in an unfamiliar guise: Vivaldi's piano-Four-te Seasons



If spring is my favourite season, I could quite happily pass the remainder of my days without ever hearing again Vivaldi's musical representation of it.

But I could not resist investigating this intriguing new disc. After all, there is no solo keyboard music by Vivaldi – a strange omission by such an industrious composer – and I cannot recall another recording of any of his music played on the piano. Do Vivaldi's bucolic impressions come across on a concert grand? How successfully have the two (American) transcribers translated idiomatic

'Biegel's performances are right on the money and quite transcend the oddity factor'

string-writing into the language of the keyboard? The answer is most effectively, perhaps surprisingly so.

Jeffrey Biegel's hyphenated seasonal cycle is based on the solo piano arrangement published by Ricordi (the transcriber is anonymous) with his own minor additions and broadenings of textures – not wholly literal transcriptions (as Liszt commented, "in matters of translation here are some exactitudes that are the equivalent of infidelities") but unadorned adaptations of the originals. At times you might be listening to a Scarlatti sonata (the repeated notes in the athletically executed outer movements of *Summer*, for instance). Andrew Gentile's arrangements show greater pianistic imagination, exchanging registers, adding new contrapuntal voices and embellishing passagework, while remaining faithful to Vivaldi's style and spirit.

Biegel's performances are right on the money and quite transcend the oddity factor, offering a fresh and original take on these much-loved scores. The recording (produced and engineered by Joseph Patrych) is out of the top drawer.

A disc, dare I say it, that put a spring in my step.

Jeremy Nicholas



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Bach

Bach Cantatas – No 9, Es ist das Heil uns kommen her^a; No 107, Was willst du dich betrüben^b; No 170, Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust^a; No 186, Ärgre dich, o Seele, nicht^b; No 187, Es wartet alles auf dich^b
Kuhnau/Bach Der Gerechte kommt um^a

^aKatharine Fuge, ^aJoanne Lunn *sops*
^aMichael Chance, ^aRichard Wyn Roberts *countertens*
^aJames Gilchrist, ^bKobie van Rensburg *tens*
^bStephan Loges, ^aStephen Varcoe *basses*
Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists / Sir John Eliot Gardiner
Soli Deo Gloria © 2 SDG156 (121' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at ^aSt Gumbertus, Ansbach, on July 30, 2000, ^bSt Mary's, Haddington, on August 5 & 6, 2000

Strong interpretations, with fine choral work in this set of cantatas for Trinity



As the longest season in the liturgical calendar, Trinity is represented by the largest corpus from within Bach's cantata oeuvre, covering a remarkable range of

gospel and epistle-inspired texts for Bach to set – from victory over death and restoration of faith over doubt, to God's power to relieve the hungry. High summer in 2000 saw the

'The pick of the crop – certainly in choral terms – is the sensational and woefully little-known Es wartet, BWV187'

pilgrimage move back and forth between Scotland and Germany – between Ansbach (of Bachwoche fame) and the late-medieval church in Haddington in the Scottish Lowlands.

The first programme, from the wonderfully named St Gumbertus in the Franconian town, is linked together by two of Bach's finest "the glass is completely empty" arias from BWV9 and BWV170 respectively: the grim tenor aria "Wir waren schon zu tief gesunken" is presented with typical rhetorical insight by James Gilchrist, while "Wie jammern" from the celebrated solo-alto cantata *Vergnügte Ruh* presents the insidious wiles of the devil with breathtaking imagery. Michael Chance gives a compellingly theatrical performance whose "liveness" brings added colour and risk, even if pitching is occasionally variable.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner brings great sensitivity to the remaining movements of

BWV9 (with its light and distinctly mature interweaving flute and oboe d'amore lines), especially the spacious geniality of the opening chorus and the ingenious duet "Herr, du siehst". This is a cantata written in the early 1730s which Bach interpolated to fill an empty gap in his second cycle of 1724–25 – as a form of good housekeeping.

The Haddington concert conveys an especially cohesive sense of gentleness, character and intimacy, largely unified by the nature and high quality of the opening movements. The languid exhortation "not to fret" in *Ärgre dich* (BWV186) is expressive in its soft-grained sympathetic gaze; it is given an appropriately introverted reading by the full ensemble, as Katharine Fuge and Richard Wyn Roberts exclaim with suitable candour in their duet-gigue on the words "O soul, be true".

No less penetrating is Gardiner's account of BWV107 (complementing Suzuki's fine but studio-bound performance in Vol 23), but the pick of the crop – certainly in choral terms – is the sensational and woefully little-known *Es wartet*, BWV187, whose opening canvas is strikingly extensive. Not all the solo contributions here are of equal merit in this second disc. One could quibble, too, over some over-exaggerated articulation, but overall the prime colours of these great pieces are undimmed, glowing with customary zeal.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Berio • Denisov

Berio Folk Songs^a. Chamber Music after James Joyce^b

Denisov La vie en rouge^c
Ensemble für Neue Musik Zürich (^abcHedwig Fassbender *mez* ^acHans-Peter Frehner *fl* ^abcHansruedi Bissegger *cl* ^aMatthias Eser, ^aLorenz Haas *perc* ^aViktor Müller *pf* ^cUrs Bumbacher *vn* ^abcDavid Riniker *vc*) / Jürg Henneberger with ^aXenia Schindler *hp* ^aCornel Anderes *va*

hat(now)ART © hat(now)ART168 (55' • DDD)
From Jecklin JD684-2

Vivid evocations of weird and wondrous other worlds aptly interpreted



La vie en rouge Russian composer Edison Denisov reached inside texts by French poet and jazz trumpeter Boris Vian to conjure up a vivid reimagining of his eclectic imagery.

Here are two modernist composers evoking other worlds. In *Folk Songs* Luciano Berio plundered the world's folk music for a cycle designed for his wife, Cathy Berberian; in

The Denisov is, in fact, a minor masterpiece. Vian was an associate of Sartre and Ionesco, and helped Duke Ellington and Miles Davis secure gigs in Paris. Denisov ingeniously teleports the listener to a mythic Paris (at least in 1973, when *La vie en rouge* was written): a world where intellectual might riffed alongside kinky

'His writing requires a singer who can morph notey, "clean" post-Webernian rigour into an authentic chanson style'

vaudeville and exotic jazz. His vocal writing requires a singer who can morph notey, "clean" post-Webernian rigour into an authentic chanson style, while keeping shunt about the obvious stylistic inconsistency. Denisov's point is, perhaps, that inside Vian's imagination these different "modernisms" had equal weight. Operating inside the accompanying ensemble music are intriguing stylistic "slippages": a waltz rises out of knotty counterpoint, explicit jazz breaks implode, a reference to the Marseillaise is trampled on with a Monty Python-like foot.

Denisov avoids postmodern clutter by putting critical distance between himself and the music – this is a fantasy. Jürg Henneberger and Hedwig Fassbender avoid the hard sell, keeping the make-believe sound world allusive and inscrutable. And they bring comparable qualities to one of the best *Folk Song* cycles around – a work whose charms have, arguably, been dinted by overfamiliarity but that has now been calmly reassessed.

Philip Clark

Handel

Alexander Balus – Shall Cleopatra ever smile again?; O take me from this hateful light. L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato – First and chief, on golden wing. Athalia – Through the land. Hercules – Ah! Think what ills the jealous prove. Jephtha – Hide thou thy hated beams; Waft her, angels, through the skies. Messiah – Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; I know that my Redeemer liveth. Rinaldo – Lascia chi'o pianga. Samson – Let the bright Seraphim. Solomon – May peace in Salem; Will the fun forget to streak. Semele – Now all this scene; Where'er you walk; O sleep, why dost thou leave me?; Hence, Iris, hence away. Concerto grosso No 4, HWV322

Karina Gauvin *sop*
Tempo Rubato / Alexander Weimann *hpd*
ATMA Classique © ACD2 2589 (80' • DDD)

IN THE
STUDIO

Handel

Alcina – Overture; Di' cor mio; Ma quando tornerai; Act 2, Sinfonia; Numi, che intendo... Ah! Mio cor!; Ah! Ruggiero crudel; Ombre pallide; Si non quella; Mi restano le lagrime; Credete a mio dolore; Suites

Christine Schäfer sop

Berlin Baroque Soloists / Rainer Kussmaul

Avi Music © AVI8553143 (74' • DDD)

A comparison of these CDs demonstrates how appearances can be deceptive



It is strange to compare and contrast these two Handel recitals. On the one hand we have the undisputedly brilliant Baroque opera star Karina Gauvin producing a disc crammed full of diverse material; on the other hand we have Christine Schäfer, ill at ease in Handel's most taxing fast passages, and confining herself to arias from only one opera. The odds would seem to be stacked in Gauvin's favour but, to me at least, she sounds more at home singing operatic repertoire rather than the oratorio fare chosen here. One wonders why she bothered to include "Lascia ch'io pianga" in an otherwise entirely English programme; it sticks out like a sore thumb (and Tempo Rubato's over-elaboration of the simple sarabande grates on the nerves). The decision to transpose tenor arias "Where'er you walk" and "Waft her angels" is not only clichéd but also baffling. Including a couple of *Messiah* arias is not inspired programming,

'Gauvin's disc is ample evidence that great singers don't necessarily always make great Handel recordings'

either. Perhaps these choices would be fine if the performances were routinely enjoyable, but much of this disc is mannered (for example the exaggeratedly slow middle part of "Rejoice greatly") and strident, and Tempo Rubato's playing lacks poetry. A few moments are better (Iole's impassioned "Ah! Think what ills" from *Hercules*) but most extracts lack the musical atmosphere and expressive personality that they deserve (for instance, "Sweet bird" is clumpy and charmless and its middle section lacks sufficient enchantment).

Gauvin's disc is ample evidence that great Handel singers don't necessarily always make great Handel recordings, whereas Schäfer conveys a rewarding experience of the composer's music: she sings eight arias from *Alcina* with audible integrity, emotional feeling and dramatic intelligence. Her voice isn't always ►

Orchid blooms

Orchid Classics is expanding. Founded by violinist Matthew Trusler in 2005, the company has recently named two new directors and appointed John Cronin, former head of classics at BMG UK, to the role of managing director. As part of the increased autumn release schedule, the label has just issued a new recording of Bach's St Matthew Passion, performed by Ex Cathedra and the Ex Cathedra Baroque Orchestra in a new English translation. A second Ex Cathedra release is scheduled for November – this time a disc of Christmas repertoire based upon the group's "Christmas by Candlelight" concert series.

Choral christmas

Continuing in the festive vein, leading non-professionals the City of London Choir under principal conductor Hilary Davan Wetton recorded a disc of Christmas repertoire for Naxos in July. Included during the sessions were works by Finzi, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Leighton, Howells, Mathias, Rodney Bennett and Rutter. Expect the album's release to coincide with the Christmas season.

Stile Antico

During March early vocal ensemble Stile Antico spent three days in London's All Hallows Church recording a disc of John Sheppard works for Harmonia Mundi. Among the music performed were the six-voice motets *Media vita* and *Gaude, gaude, gaude Maria*. "Song of Songs", the group's most recent release for Harmonia Mundi was a collection of works inspired by the Biblical text attributed to King Solomon. Awarded a Gramophone Editor's Choice, the disc was praised for its "quiet good taste and stylistically homogeneous approach", and "freshness of voices" by Peter Quantrell (08/09).

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Nikolaus Harnoncourt:
a man for all seasons



Harnoncourt revisits Haydn's pastoral oratorio with sensational results

Haydn

Die Jahreszeiten, HobXXI/3

Genia Kühmeier sop Werner Güra ten

Christian Gerhaher bar Arnold Schoenberg Choir; Concentus Musicus Wien / Nikolaus Harnoncourt

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 2 88697 28126 2 (137' • DDD)

Selected comparisons:

Harnoncourt (4/87) (APEX) 2564 62086-2

Gardiner (5/92) (ARKIV) 431 818-2AH2

Jacobs (A/04) (HARM) HMC80 1829/30

Nikolaus Harnoncourt's new *Seasons* trumps his 1987 recording (Apex, 4/87^R) on virtually every count. The conductor's affection for the spirit and teeming detail of Haydn's celebration of an idealised rural world is again manifest. Yet pacing and characterisation now seem that much more natural, with none of the earlier recording's idiosyncratic (usually slow) tempo choices. The opening chorus of "Spring", for instance, distinctly lethargic in 1987, now has a gentle lilt, with a palpable sense of wonder and delight at nature's rebirth.

Speeds in the choral numbers still tend to be broader than those favoured by Gardiner (Archiv, 5/92) and the bucolically uninhibited René Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi, A/04), sometimes, as in the oratorio's majestic finale, with a welcome gain in nobility. One or two of the fugues – say, the ones in the Prayer in "Spring" and the summer tempest – are again slightly marred by Harnoncourt's trademark exaggerated *staccatos* and fussy, micro-managed dynamics. But the boozy wine harvest rivals Jacobs's in lusty, lurching exuberance. Here and elsewhere – not least in the thrilling account of the autumn chase, with its shifting horn perspectives and vividly whooping grace notes from trombones and bassoons – Harnoncourt and his crack forces (the Arnold Schönberg Choir more incisively recorded than in 1987) relish all the bold and brilliant colours of Haydn's astonishingly inventive score.

Harnoncourt's solo team, too, is a match for any on disc. Fast-rising soprano Genia Kühmeier is an enchanting Hanne, radiant and graceful in her big aria in "Summer", and singing her song of aristocratic lust outwitted with just the right knowing humour. Werner Güra, as mellifluous and elegant as he was for Jacobs, and the virile, imposing baritone of Christian Gerhaher both bring to their music (including the ostensibly routine "dry" recitatives) a Lieder singer's care for precise colouring and character. Abetted by Harnoncourt's atmospheric accompaniments, Güra's description of summer torpor and Gerhaher's sombre and dramatic memento mori in "Winter" are two highlights of an often inspiring recording. For a prime recommendation in this glorious, life-affirming work of the composer's old age, the choice now lies between Gardiner, Jacobs and this new Harnoncourt. **Richard Wigmore**

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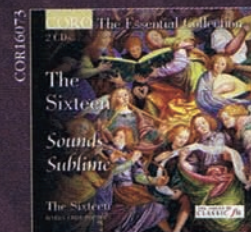
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OCTOBER RELEASE



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ideally elegant in the most difficult coloratura (things get a bit stretched and pinched in "Ombre pallide") but she successfully communicates Alcina's personality and predicaments. The slow interpretation of "Ah! Mio cor!" is sincerely moving; taken at about half the speed of that adopted by Alan Curtis on his recent complete *Alcina*, this is most likely at the "wrong" tempo but it effectively communicates to the listener, and works well for Schäfer's emotionally bare singing. The Berlin Baroque Soloists provide unfussy and tasteful accompaniments and orchestral interludes.

David Vickers

Haydn

Stabat mater, HobXXb/1^b. *Symphony No 44, 'Trauer'*. Concerto for Violin, Keyboard and Strings, HobXVIII/6^c

^aAnna Maria Bondi sop ^aClaudia Eder mez ^aAxel Reichardt ten ^aJürg Krattinger bass ^aJacques Francis Manzone tm ^aFrançoise Petit hpd ^aPhilippe Caillard Choral; Paris Orchestre des Soloistes / Henri-Claude Fantapié

Divine Art ② DDA2121-2 (120' • AAD)

Haydn sacred rarities that do him no favours in his anniversary year



This repackaging of Parisian performances from 1964 (the symphony and concerto) and 1978 is a case of misplaced piety. The *Stabat mater*, the work that made Haydn's

international reputation, is hobbled by soggy orchestral textures, a woolly-sounding chorus and ponderous, rhythmically turgid direction. Tempi often sound even slower than they actually are. The soloists, too, are an unalluring bunch, the women tremulous, the men feeble. The trudging beat and ill-blended singing in the potentially beautiful quartet "Virgo virginum" encapsulate all that is most depressing about the performance. If you want a recording of this gravely imposing, deeply felt work, the choice lies between the dramatic, abrasive, sometimes over-insistent Harnoncourt (Teldec, 8/95) and, my own preference, Pinnock (Archiv, 9/90), warmer in tone and more naturally paced.

Haydn collectors may be attracted by the rare *Libera me, Domine*, unearthed by HC Robbins Landon in 1966. It's an austere exercise in the ancient "Palestrina style" though the case for Haydn's authorship is by no means watertight.

The best thing that can be said about the *Trauer* Symphony is that Fantapié rightly divides his violins antiphonally. But the string playing is often scrappy and ill-tuned – though in this age of orchestral homogeneity it is intriguing to hear those saxophony Gallic horns. The celestial *Adagio* plods gracelessly, seemingly phrased bar-by-bar. In the slight, early Double Concerto (which Haydn conceived for violin and organ) the balance is badly misjudged, with the bright, rather strident violin assaulting the ear while the

harpsichord tinkles demurely in the background. In sum, a dispiriting collection of performances that should have been left decently interred.

Richard Wigmore

MacMillan • Vaughan Williams

MacMillan *O bone Jesu*^a. Mairi Vaughan Williams

Mass in G minor^b. Silence and Music

^aKerstin Steube, ^bAleksandra Lustig sop

^aMaria van Eldik, ^bUlrike Becker contr ^aAlexander

Yudenkov, ^bJulius Pfeifer tens ^aAchim Jäckel,

^bBernhard Hartmann basses South West German

Radio Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Marcus Creed

Hänssler Classic ② CD93 250 (53' • DDD)

Accomplished a cappella singing from this high-class Stuttgart ensemble



A product of Oxbridge and London's Guildhall School of Music (and a former member of King's College Choir), Marcus Creed has forged a

distinguished career for himself in Germany, where he currently holds the posts of professor of conducting at Cologne's Musikhochschule and artistic director of the SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart. They're a tremendously adroit and versatile group whose immaculate polish, scrupulous blend and stylish musicality cannot fail to impress. Certainly it's hard to imagine more luminously textured or jaw-droppingly eloquent renderings of the two pieces by James MacMillan. *O bone Jesu* (2002) was designed as a companion piece to the eponymous 19-part motet by the 16th-century Scot, Robert Carver, and shares that work's exuberant virtuosity and formal design. Creed and company lend it breathtaking advocacy, totally unfazed by the fearsome technical challenges, and it's a similar story in the plaintive glow of *Mairi*, an inspired setting of the 19th-

'It's hard to imagine more luminously textured or jaw-droppingly eloquent renderings of the two pieces by MacMillan'

century Gaelic poet Evan MacColl, written for the BBC Singers to mark their 70th anniversary in 1994.

If the performance of Vaughan Williams's sublime Mass doesn't muster the same degree of devotional ardour that made Mike Brewer's recent recording with Laudibus such a treat (Delphian, 11/08), it's still an impressively mellifluous display, albeit without disturbing my own longstanding allegiance to much-loved predecessors like Matthew Best's 1983 Corydon Singers account (Helios, 10/87⁸) and Sir David Willcocks's 1968 King's College version (EMI). The beautiful part song *Silence and Music* (VW's

contribution to the 1953 Coronation collection *A Garland for the Queen*) comes off very well in Stuttgart. Stunningly natural SACD sound from the SWR production crew. Short measure, then, but superior quality! **Andrew Achenbach**

Rossini

Stabat mater

Maria Stader sop Marianna Radev contr

Ernst Haefliger ten Kim Borg bass St Hedwig's

Cathedral Choir; RIAS Chamber Choir,

Boys Choir and Symphony Orchestra, Berlin /

Ferenc Fricsay

Audite mono ② AUDITE95 587 (59' • ADD)

Recorded 1954

Fricsay in concert, and a dramatic reading of Rossini's sacred masterpiece



This is not a reissue of Fricsay's memorable 1954 DG recording of Rossini's *Stabat mater* but a live performance given with identical forces in Berlin's Hochschule für Musik

three days later. The recording, transferred directly from Deutschlandradio studio tapes, is first-rate, clear and immediate, an occasional touch of sibilance notwithstanding.

Anyone familiar with Fricsay's celebrated 1953 DG Verdi Requiem will know how fiery and expressive his direction is. And how scrupulous. No Italian conductor on record has

'Haefliger's account of the "Cuius animam" is one of the finest on record, the final top D flat perfectly sounded'

dared to take Rossini's tempo markings in the work's opening and closing movements as literally as Fricsay. The *Introduzione* in particular benefits enormously from his swift and involving reading. Text matters as much to Fricsay (a devout Roman Catholic) as it did to Rossini, whose reading of the Latin poem was more comprehending than the "What's he doing writing religious music?" brigade could begin to imagine.

Even the assiduous Fricsay has trouble keeping tabs on Kim Borg in the "Pro peccatis" (which lacks its opening drumroll) but elsewhere his deeply felt moulding of the text draws memorable responses from his singers, not least Maria Stader in a thrilling and mercifully unoperatic "Inflamatus". Ernst Haefliger's account of the "Cuius animam" is one of the finest on record, the final top D flat perfectly sounded.

Though this ensemble of Berlin choirs was probably as fine as any in Europe at the time, the perils of live performance take their toll in the unaccompanied "Eja mater" which ends up a semitone sharp (the choir is better in tune in "Quando corpus morietur"). This, however, is a



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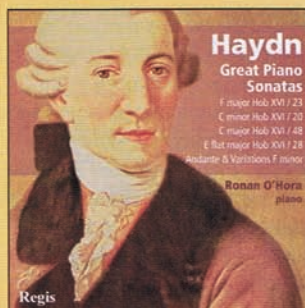
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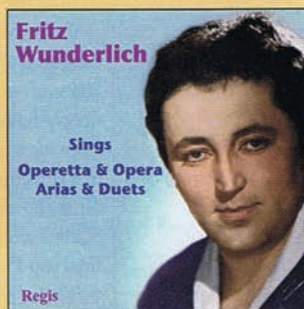
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Elgar, Mendelssohn

Saturday 27 February 2010 7.30pm
Philharmonia Orchestra: Andris Nelsons
Verdi, Rachmaninov

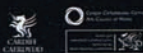
Friday 12 March 2010 7.30pm
Philharmonia Orchestra: Christoph von Dohnányi
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small price to pay in an otherwise accomplished live performance that has about it the true blaze of faith. **Richard Osborne**

A Scarlatti

La Giuditta ('Cambridge' version)

Sophie Landy *sop* Raphaël Pichon *countertenor*

Carl Ghazarossian *ten* Nice Ensemble Baroque /

Gilbert Bezzina

Dynamic Ⓢ CDS596 (74' • DDD)

A Scarlatti

Euridice dall'Inferno^a. La concettione della Beata

Vergine^b. Cello sonata No 2^c. Toccata in A major^d

^{ab}Melissa Givens *sop* ^bGerrod Pagenkopf *countertenor*

^bJoseph Gaines *ten* ^bTimothy Jones *bass* ^bBarrett

Sills *bqvc* ^{cd}Matthew Dirst *bp* Ars Lyrica Houston

Naxos Ⓢ 8 570950 (58' • DDD)

A Hebrew assassination and colourful Catholic propaganda from Scarlatti



Alessandro Scarlatti composed two oratorios about the Hebrew widow Judith's assassination of the Assyrian warrior Holofernes. An elaborate version written for Cardinal Ottoboni in Rome in 1693 or 1694 has been recorded a few times; but a more obscure and smaller-scale version dates from 1697 and only survives in a manuscript

now in the Rowe Library at King's College, Cambridge. Featuring only three voices, strings and continuo, this is given a patchy performance by the Ensemble Baroque de Nice, whose playing is occasionally ragged (the Sinfonia) but at best is sinewy and richly rhetorical, and successfully evocative of softer moods (for instance, as the Nurse lulls the unsuspecting Oloferne to sleep). The soloists do a creditable job of conveying Scarlatti's imaginatively and skilfully written short arias and duets (Giuditta's "Non ti curo" is ravishing). The warts-and-all live performance is uneven but honest.

Ars Lyrica Houston's debut disc contains Scarlatti's *La concettione della Beata Vergine* (Rome, 1703), which recycled music from his earlier oratorio *I dolori di Maria sempre Vergine* (Naples, 1693; now lost). Scored for four solo voices, two violins and continuo, this is a fervent piece of Catholic propaganda in which Heresy and the Serpent squabble with Grace about the plausibility of the Immaculate Conception, until the Archangel Michael intervenes and sets the record straight. The compact work is skilfully performed by the Houstonians. The group's director Matthew Dirst contributes an impressive harpsichord toccata, and Barrett Sills plays a fine cello sonata in C minor with exemplary skill and taste. The cantata *Euridice dall'Inferno* (1699) depicts the heart-rending ▶

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Andrew Kennedy gives masterly performances

Iain Burnside: expert accompanist



An imaginative mix of songs beautifully sung in an array of different languages

EDITOR'S CHOICE
GRAMOPHONE
THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MAGAZINE

Liszt

'Liszt Abroad'

Blume und Duft, S324. Comment, disaient-ils, S276. Du bist wie eine Blume, S287. Enfant, si j'étais roi, S283. Farewell, S299. Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam, S309. Gastibelza, S286. Gebet, S331. Go Not, Happy Day, S335. Im Rhein, im schönen Strome, S272. Die Loreley, S273. Morgens steh' ich auf und frage, S290. Oh! Quand je dors, S282. Tre Sonetti di Petrarca, S270 – Pace non trovo; Benedetto sia 'l giorno; I vidi in terra angelici costumi. Und wir dachten der Toten, S338. Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh, S306. Die Vätergruft, S281. Wie singt die Lerche schön, S312

Rebecca Evans *sop* Andrew Kennedy *ten*

Matthew Rose *bar* Iain Burnside *pf*

Signum Classics Ⓢ SIGCD155 (80' • DDD)

"Liszt was here" is a badge of honour that could probably be claimed by most centres of civilisation in 19th-century Europe (he even played in my home town of Coventry, which was sufficiently civilised to provide him, I believe, with an audience of 30). The wanderer is here represented by a programme of songs in as many as six different languages. The English selection is an interesting one – Tennyson's "Go Not, Happy Day", including the "red man" verse omitted in the better-known setting by Frank Bridge. He treats the words for their sense, which he follows thoughtfully, lingering over the last phrase ("and a rose her mouth") in a manner that reveals its eroticism clearly to Iain Burnside but, I'm proud to say, eludes me. The Russian song, "Gebet", is a prayer by

Lermontov; and the Hungarian one, gypsy-like in character at the start, is a farewell. The French songs to words by Hugo are comparatively familiar, as are the settings of Goethe and Heine. The Italian is of course

'The Three Sonnets are sung by Rebecca Evans – surprisingly, perhaps, but very beautifully'

Petrarch, with the now-famous *Three Sonnets*.

These are sung by Rebecca Evans – surprisingly, perhaps (for they are more properly a man's songs, and Andrew Kennedy was at hand), but very beautifully. She has developed in expressive powers, with additional colour in the lower part of her range, and her soft high tones, as in the last phrase of the first sonnet, are magically poised. Kennedy, too, is at his best, masterly indeed in "Die Loreley". Matthew Rose, described as "baritone", sings as a bass the songs clearly written for that voice: most effectively in "Gastibelza", the song that Iain Burnside distinguishes as the only one he can think of that combines mad scene and bolero. Burnside himself, presiding spirit throughout, accompanies expertly. **John Steane**

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lament of Eurydice as she hopes that her beloved Orpheus will use his lyre to liberate her from Hades. The continuo group plays with sensitivity and Melissa Givens gives an impassioned performance of strongly characterised and eloquent music (although her voice is a bit strident in arias). These two discs offer plenty to confirm that Scarlatti fully deserves his gradual rehabilitation. **David Vickers**

Vivaldi

'Bellezza crude'

All'ombra di sospetto, RV678^a. La farfalla s'aggira al lume, RV660^a. Che giova il sospirar, RV679^a. Se ben vivono senz'alma, RV664^a. Flute Concerto, RV441^b. Bassoon Concerto, RV484^c

^aTone Wik sop ^bAlexandra Opsahl fl

^cPer Hannisdal bn Barokkanerne

2L (P) 2L565ACD (64' • DDD)

Chamber cantatas and concertos on a disc that's a pleasure to hear



It seems that it is becoming the norm to put out discs of Vivaldi chamber cantatas mixed with other works for contrast – and a good idea it is too. Here are four cantatas full of exquisitely shaded Arcadian love and pain interspersed with a concerto each for bassoon and recorder, and laid out thus every piece is allowed to reveal its individual merits rather than merge with the others in the mind as they can on single-genre releases. The cantatas are sung by Tone Wik, a Norwegian soprano with a pretty and characterful voice strongly reminiscent at times of the young Emma Kirkby, though sometimes too with an occasionally discomforting fragility that the English singer never had. Still, it makes a pleasant change from the more operatic voices we are increasingly hearing in Vivaldi, compared to which, it must be said, Wik makes a far more convincing and love-vulnerable nymph.

The cantatas differ slightly in scoring – *Che giova il sospirar*, *povero core* has string accompaniment, *La farfalla s'aggira al lume* and *Se ben vivono senz'alma* continuo only, while *All'ombra di sospetto* features flute and continuo – but all are typical of Vivaldi in their imaginative ritornellos, affecting vocal lines (none of his operatic vocal athletics here) and a sensitive way with recitative. The cello's flitting butterfly effect in *La farfalla* is a particularly happy inspiration. The instrumental playing from Barokkanerne (Norwegian again, though with the Palladians' Rodolfo Richter guest-leading) is of a fine standard, as is that of the nimble concerto soloists; it is a real pleasure to hear Vivaldi's plangent E minor Bassoon Concerto performed with solo strings offering such ardently immediate support.

This is one of those releases that is easy to pass by but actually well worth spending a little time with. **Lindsay Kemp**

Vivaldi

Juditha triumphans, RV645

Sara Macliver, Fiona Campbell soprs Sally-Anne Russell, Renée Martin mezs David Walker countertenor Cantillation; Orchestra of the Antipodes / Attilio Cremonesi

ABC Classics (M) 2 ABC476 6957 (118' • DDD)

A dramatic reading of Vivaldi's bloodthirsty Old Testament oratorio



Vivaldi is known to have composed four oratorios but only *Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernes barbarie* (performed at Venice's Ospedale della Pietà in

November 1716) has survived. Those who remain sceptical about Vivaldi's powers as a musical dramatist on the evidence of his operas might be impressed by this exciting and richly orchestrated depiction of how the cunning and seductive heroine Judith (who was omitted from Protestant versions of the Old Testament) gains the trust of the Assyrian general Holofernes, lulls him to sleep, decapitates him, and thereby liberates Bethulia. There are already half a dozen recordings, including fine versions by Robert King (Hyperion, 5/98) and Alessandro de Marchi (Naïve, A/01). This new account by the Pinchgut Opera Company was recorded live during staged performances in Sydney.

The Sinfonia (arranged from RV562 by assistant director Benjamin Bayl) and opening chorus crackle with raw energy. Attilio Cremonesi's interpretation certainly has ample spirit and flair in fast music, even if it eschews

'It seems as if Cremonesi resolved for the orchestra to make as bold an impact as humanly possible'

the more natural and elegant approach readily apparent in King's performance. Unlike Vivaldi's all-female performance at the Pietà, Cantillation's tenors and basses are men, and Holofernes is sung by countertenor David Walker (notwithstanding his illustrious opera CV, this is a rare appearance on disc). I enjoyed Sara Macliver's unforced stylishness, Fiona Campbell's understated singing in the beautiful pastoral sleep scene "Umbrae carae", and Sally-Anne Russell's sensitive vocal interplay with soft exotic instrumental colours (solo viola d'amore in "Quanto magis", chalumeau in "Veni, me sequere fida", mandolin in "Transit aetas" and viols in "In somno profundo"). The finest music-making from singers and players alike is most frequently to be found in the gentlest arias. Elsewhere it seems as if Cremonesi resolved for the Orchestra of the Antipodes to make as bold an impact as humanly possible. This provides

visceral excitement but only really suits Vagaus's venomous rage aria "Armatae face" (sung upon discovering his murdered Assyrian lord), and beforehand does not always serve Vivaldi's music faithfully. Cremonesi's over-arpeggiated harpsichord showboating during recitatives is an interventionist impediment but he paces the gaps between recitatives and arias superbly, and overall Pinchgut Opera's sixth CD production is its best so far. **David Vickers**

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Christine Brewer sop Karen Cargill mez Stuart Neill ten John Relyea bass London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Sir Colin Davis

LSO Live (B) 2 LSO0683 (82' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican Hall, London in January 2009

Selected comparisons:

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Gardiner (4/95) (PHIL) 442 142-2PH2

Giulini (7/00) (BBCL) BBCL4029-2

Pappano (see page 99) (EMI) 698936-2

Uneven recorded sound compromises a potentially fine performance



The last time I heard Sir Colin Davis conduct the Verdi Requiem was in 1992 at a concert given in memory of the late Claudio Arrau. He is a fine Verdian who, like

Toscanini at a similar age, has lost none of his fire and command. Not that this is in any sense a Toscanini-like performance. Like most latter-day interpreters, Sir Colin conducts the Requiem with a judicious mix of fire and meditative calm; tempi never drag nor are they, in the reflective passages, metronome-quick. The work of the LSO Chorus is first-rate, as is that of the LSO itself. As for the soloists, they are passable, though, as with many live accounts of the Requiem, the recording itself is a complicating factor.

Alan Blyth argued that were it not for the remote balance of the soloists ("a serious

'Sir Colin Davis conducts the Requiem with a judicious mix of fire and meditative calm'

drawback in this piece"), Riccardo Muti's live Milan performance would be an evident front-runner. In this live Barbican performance, the soloists are not exactly remote; equally, they are not quite "there". That former doyen of *Gramophone* reviewers Trevor Harvey used to complain bitterly about records that caused him endlessly to rise from his chair to adjust the



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volume. His shade was certainly at my elbow as I tried, with little success, to find here a setting that gave the soloists presence without making the tightly focused Barbican recording sound strident in the climaxes.

My initial impression of all four soloists was of an excess of vibrato, and some insecurity, beyond the stage. Since this sometimes ceases to be the case during the more reflective sequences, I am left wondering how much of the performance came from the live concerts and how much from carefully framed out-of-hours make-up sessions.

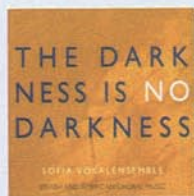
Whatever the answer, the end product is inconsistent in terms of both quality and balance. For a genuine "live" experience go to Toscanini or Giulini's generally fine 1963 Proms performance on BBC Legends. Better still are Giulini's EMI studio recording, the John Eliot Gardiner on Philips, and the outstanding new Pappano set on EMI.

Richard Osborne

'The Darkness is No Darkness'

Bingham The Darkness Is No Darkness **Dove** Into Thy Hands **Gjeilo** Prelude **Howells** Requiem **Lauridsen** O magnum mysterium **MacMillan**: The Strathclyde Motets – Videns Dominus; Factus est repente; Mitte manum tuam; Data est mihi **SS Wesley** Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace **Whitacre** Water Night **Sofia Vokalensemble** / Bengt Ollén **Footprint** © FRCD047 (67' • DDD)

Sophisticated performances from the Sofia Vokalensemble



There's a rather neat moment of thematic continuity on this disc. Judith Bingham's eponymous setting is followed by the work upon which it draws:

Samuel Wesley's "Thou Wilt Keep Him Perfect Piece". Add Herbert Howells and Jonathan Dove's strangely compatible contributions and one could be excused for thinking that this disc attempts a broad, if selective, sweep of the English choral tradition.

Surprising then that the choir in question is Swedish group Sofia Vokalensemble. Yet they embrace this tradition as if they had grown up breathing the air of Westminster Abbey. In fact the disc is more Anglo-American than English, as shown in the opening and closing works by the ubiquitous Eric Whitacre and less well-known Danish émigré Morten Lauridsen. The stacked consonances and dynamic shifts of Whitacre's "Water Night" pull on the right emotional strings, but one is left wondering how much depth actually lies beneath the surface. On the other hand, Lauridsen's quietly compelling setting of "O Magnum Mysterium" is an impressive attempt at controlled understatement. This rather sums up the choir's achievements too, as evidenced in the

commanding solo contributions by the quartet of soloists in Howells's poignant Requiem, composed in 1936. In contrast, the inclusion of Ola Gjeilo's "Prelude" has something of the "joker in the pack" about it, shaking the listener out of the spiritual torpor which the disc at times is in danger of inducing. Like Gjeilo, James MacMillan's music also falls outside the Anglo-American axis, but a more tangible liturgical dimension informs his *Strathclyde Motets*, four of which are included here, with stasis and repetition evolving organically from both religious text and ritual context.

Pwyll ap Siôn

'Mediterranea'

Anonymous Salterello. Nani, nani. Or piangiamo che piange Maria. Principio di virtù. Istanpitta Isabella. Madonna Santa Maria. Oh bel visino. Oh re re lu passierelle n'dalla vena Tarantella. Camini por altas torres. Un pregon pregon el rey. Bella figliola ca te chiamma Rosa. A la una yo naci. Durme, durme, hermozo hijico **Comtessa de Dia** A chanter m'er de ço qu'eu no volria **Ghirardello da Firenze** I vo bene a chi vol bene a me **Guiraut Riquier** Aissi com es sobronrada

Alla Francesca (Brigitte Lesne *mez* Pierre Hamon *fls* Carlo Rizzo *perc/sngr*)

Zig Zag Territoires © ZZT090402 (63' • DDD)

A smorgasbord of early Mediterranean monophony, dazzlingly performed



With the title "Mediterranea", the musicians of Alla Francesca aim to give a sense of the full range of early music from the coastline of the

Mediterranean. To do this they need to select from a fair range of early monophonic repertoires: troubadour songs by Guiraut Riquier and Comtessa de Dia, Italian *laude* of the late 13th century, a single Italian song of Ghirardello da Firenze, three Italian instrumental *estampies* from the London Trecento manuscript, three traditional songs in various kinds of Italian, and five Spanish-language pieces from the Sephardic repertory of decidedly uncertain origin.

What perhaps brings them all together is the musicianship of the three solo performers here.

'The three work together superbly as an ensemble, providing constant stimulus to the ear'

The main weight of the singing goes to Brigitte Lesne's marvellous mezzo voice with its wide variety of colours and techniques, never overstepping the mark; though Carlo Rizzo contributes some nice Italian folksinging. Pierre Hamon, that inexhaustible virtuoso of recorders and related wind instruments, continues to

astonish with his range of articulations and embellishment styles; he seems to become an ever more rounded artist as the years pass. And Carlo Rizzo constantly dazzles with his resourceful percussion playing, even if there is room for asking whether his highly sophisticated drum-set improvisations are appropriate, given that the surviving representations from the Middle Ages appear to show only very heavy drumsticks that would hardly be capable of what he does here. The main point, though, is that the three work together superbly as an ensemble, providing constant stimulus to the ear. Obviously the danger in this kind of music-making is that it can become self-indulgent – and has done sometimes in the past in the hands of these artists; but on this occasion it seems to me that everything is done with a perfectly judged combination of inventiveness and tact.

David Fallows

'More Divine Than Human'

Music from The Eton Choirbook
J Browne Stabat mater **Cornysh** Salve regina
Davy In honore summe matris **Fawkyner** Gaude rosa sine spina **Lambe** Magnificat
Choir of Christ Church Cathedral / Stephen Darlington
Avie © AV2167 (79' • DDD)

These trebles excel in some of the most virtuoso music ever written for children



The Eton Choirbook ranks among the most difficult music composed to be sung by children, namely the boy trebles of the countless choral foundations that dotted

the British Isles in the late Middle Ages. In the last year or so, a concentrated group of recordings has appeared from some of the most renowned of those choral foundations, whose distant but direct descendants are really getting their collective teeth into the repertoire. This latest is very impressive, and I cannot recommend it too highly. The trebles here excel, both as soloists and, just as remarkably, when several sing together on the same line. In music as exposed on top as this can be, such unanimity is essential, but rare. Peter Quantrill praised this ensemble's previous recording on this label (of Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi trinitas*), but I found it laboured and flat-footed, precisely because the tempi seem to have been chosen to accommodate trebles who struggled audibly with the music's demands. Here, everything goes swimmingly.

Much of the Choirbook has already been recorded: Cornysh's *Salve regina* and Browne's *Stabat mater dolorosa* justifiably boast many interpretations, but very few with trebles, and these stand comparison with the finest. Davy's *In honore summe matris*, clocking in at nearly 18 minutes, is one of the longest pieces in the manuscript, but I found myself warming more

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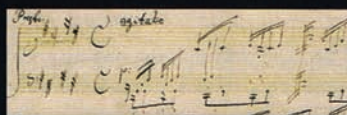
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than usual to its composer's garrulous manner. Seasoned Eton enthusiasts will want to own this because two very fine pieces appear on CD, as far as I'm aware, for the first time: Walter Lambe's *Magnificat* and Fawkyner's *Gaude rosa sine spina*. Of Fawkyner absolutely nothing is known, but his style is close to Browne's, though lacking his quite startling individuality. The sound recording is both close enough to capture details and atmospheric enough to flatter the ear. Dare we hope for more of this, while these young voices are still in their prime?

Fabrice Fitch

'The Sacred Flame'

Anerio Christus factus est **Bach** O Jesu Christ meus Lebens Licht **Buxtehude** Magnificat **Gabrieli** Jubilate Deo **Gesualdo** O vos omnes **Hassler** Dixit Maria **John IV of Portugal** Crux fidelis **Josquin Desprez** Ave Maria **Lassus** Ave verum corpus. Timor et tremor **Monteverdi** Beatus vir. Cantate Domino. Christe adoramus te **Palestrina** Exsultate Deo. Sicut cervus **Schutz** Psalm 100. Selig sind die Toten **Sweelinck** Laudate Dominum **Victoria** O vos omnes. Jesu dulcis memoria

Cambridge Singers; La Nuova Musica /

John Rutter

Collegium © COLCD134 (78' • DDD • T/t)

A pleasing anthology that delivers what it promises



This anthology spans the entire 16th and 17th centuries, employing singers and instrumentalists as required. Given its breadth of coverage it manages not

to sound sprawling, and there are no weak links as regards either performance or programming. The decision to include *concertato* items (Monteverdi, Buxtehude and Bach) lends the project more variety than an entirely *a cappella* recital would have afforded. Many of the pieces one would expect to find are there indeed, and it's no disrespect to the Cambridge Singers to say that the performances are, again, much as one would expect: they don't disappoint, and in a few of the slightly less familiar pieces they surprise (as with the two short motets by Monteverdi, *Cantate Domino* and *Christe adoramus te*, or the almost bustling *Dixit Maria ad angeli* of Hassler). The instrumentalists from La Nuova Musica are sensible and sensitive accompanists, their light ornamentation in the Baroque pieces proving more than just a nod to the conventions of performance practice. Asked to select a highlight, I might suggest Josquin's famous *Ave Maria*... *Virgo serena*, which is very nicely done. And a low point? Well, the transition into the penultimate *concertato* section of Monteverdi's *Beatus vir* judders noticeably. Finally, all these pieces are taken from a published anthology of early music classics and just occasionally one wishes that a few hoary clichés (eg Josquin, "father of Renaissance music") and outdated biographical information had been updated. **Fabrice Fitch**

'Sacred Garland'

Bovicelli Angelus ad pastores **Corradini** Spargite flores **Crotti** Congratulamini **Donati** O gloriosa Domina **Frescobaldi** Canzona 'La Bernardina'. Canzona 'La Capriola'. Toccata I **Grandi** Jesu, mi dulcissime **Kapsberger** Toccata VII **Merula** Nigra sum.

Gaudeamus omnes **Monteverdi** Venite, sitientes ad aquas **Palestrina** Pulchra es amica mea **Picchi** Toccata **Piccinini** Toccata XII **Re** Tulerunt Dominum **Rossi** Partite sopra la Romanesca

Gonzaga Band (Faye Newton *sop* Jamie Savan *corts* Richard Sweeney *theo* Steven Devine *hpd/org*)

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0761 (63' • DDD)

Faultless and fascinating – must-have music by Monteverdi's contemporaries



The Gonzaga Band, a flexible ensemble, consists here of soprano, cornett, theorbo and keyboard. It takes its name from the ruling family of Mantua, known to music lovers

mainly for employing, then dismissing, the leading native composer of the day. This excellent disc is devoted to music by Monteverdi's contemporaries, but the great man does get a look-in.

The piece in question is *Venite, sitientes ad aquas*, published in an anthology of music by "diversi eccellentissimi autori" in 1624. Written for two sopranos, it's performed here by soprano and cornett: in his booklet-notes Jamie Savan points out that an instrument would often be substituted for one or more vocal parts, the cornett being considered particularly suitable.

There's plenty of variety. Alessandro Grandi's *Jesu, mi dulcissime*, part recitative, part arioso, is full of melismas and natural-sounding ornamentation. Tarquinio Merula's *Nigra sum* includes melismas too, at "annunciate dilecto meo", and it ends with repeated alleluias, voice and cornett rejoicing together. In Ignatio

'The Palestrina is fascinating: the organ plays the motet while the cornett embarks on a one-man jam session'

Donati's *O gloriosa Domina* the echo effect is provided by a mute – that is to say straight, not curved, with an integrated mouthpiece – cornett.

The treatment of the Palestrina is fascinating: the organ plays the motet, *Pulchra es amica mea*, while the cornett embarks on a one-man jam session. The Hilliard Ensemble and Jan Garbarek's saxophone are not very far away. A madrigal by Cipriano de Rore is treated similarly in the piece by Bovicelli, but this time with voice.

Faye Newton sings delightfully, and the players – especially Savan on the cornett – are impossible to fault. Great stuff!

Richard Lawrence

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Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Anja Harteros *sop* Sonia Ganassi *mez* Rolando Villazón *ten* René Pape *bass* Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano

EMI © 2 698936-2 (84' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live in Rome on January 8-13, 2009

Selected comparisons:

Giulini (7/64R) (EMI) 567560-2

Toscanini (5/90) (RCA) GD60299

Gardiner (4/95) (PHIL) 442 142-2PH2

Abbado (1/02) (EMI) 557168-2

When Hans von Bülow described the Requiem as "Verdi's latest opera, albeit in ecclesiastical garb", the ever perceptive Brahms declared that he had made "an almighty fool of himself". There always has been more to Verdi's Requiem than popular perception would have us believe, which is why its recorded history has become so important to our evolving understanding of it. Three recordings stand out as landmark achievements: Toscanini's live 1951 Carnegie Hall performance, Giulini's 1963-64 studio recording, and the 1992 John Eliot Gardiner. To which we can now add, as a superbly realized garnering of these accumulated insights, this exceptionally fine new Pappano set.

Toscanini's performance represented the old authenticity. Toscanini played for Verdi and knew the tradition from within. He conducted the Requiem with Italian singers and an unremitting

intensity, born in part of a desire to honour the often surprisingly brisk metronome marks. It was Giulini who forged another way, more Catholic and more considered, in a reading that opened out the work's meditative aspect, marrying broad tempi in the lyric sections to a powerfully argued dramatic continuum organically evolved.

So concentrated an approach places great demands on the solo quartet and here Giulini set the bar high in terms of both the quality of the voices needed and their blend. Without these qualities – Gardiner's soloists have them and so in remarkable measure do Pappano's – the Holy Grail of a near-perfect Verdi Requiem will always be a distant dream, as is proved by Abbado's oddly (and in a couple of cases, poorly) cast 2001 Berlin set.

Talk of Gardiner's recording being a "period performance" was misleading. Gardiner further developed our sense of the multilayered skill of Verdi's vocal writing. His expert shaping of the vocal lines – tempi finely judged, often broad, never metronomically driven – revealed the work occupying spaces which Bruckner or Fauré might have been pleased to inhabit. And now Pappano follows suit. The Monteverdi Choir, you might think, would have a head start over Rome's Santa Cecilia Chorus; yet it is a sign of how far choral singing has come in recent years that nowadays even an Italian opera chorus is not easily outmanoeuvred. The Santa Cecilia "Sanctus", defter than Giulini's, is almost as dancingly precise as Gardiner's. Moulding

vocal and instrumental lines with an authentically Italianate feel is important to any performance of the Requiem. Second nature to Toscanini and Giulini, it is a quality that contributes hugely to the eloquence and allure of Pappano's performance. You hear this early in the sense of a live narrative unfolding which mezzo soprano Sonia Ganassi brings to the "Liber scriptus". Fine as Gardiner's Anne Sofie von Otter is at this point, the manner is a degree or two less Italianate.

Ganassi's soprano partner is Anja Harteros. Where Giulini sought fuller voices – Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig, both flawless and richly involving – Harteros's lighter yet similarly accomplished singing, radiant and sympathetic, suits Pappano's reading to perfection: part and parcel of the wonderful blend within the quartet. It was Giulini's Nicolai Gedda who showed how the tenor is more an

'Pape is as fine as any on record, strong yet discreet, with a mastery of the subtly inflected cantabile line'

inspiring presence than an egregious showstopper. Rolando Villazón is similarly discreet in the self-abasing loveliness of his "Ingemisco" and the proffered quiet of the "Hostias". Meanwhile, the bass René Pape is as fine as any on record, strong yet discreet, with a mastery of the subtly inflected *cantabile* line that is profoundly satisfying. As with Alastair Miles's not dissimilar performance under Gardiner, this is markedly different from the Commendatore-like manner of Giulini's Nicolai Ghiaurov.

Where London's Kingsway Hall barely contained the might of Giulini's reading, Rome's superb new Parco della Musica auditorium is all clarity and ease, as sympathetic to the Lieder-like musings of the "Agnus Dei" as it is to the decibel-fuelled fires of the "Dies irae". Pappano's all-inclusive reading needs both.

My sole reservation concerns the opening. The composer Ildebrando Pizzetti spoke of the Requiem beginning "like the murmur of an invisible crowd". Even so, you will have difficulty hearing anything on the new set much before bar 6. What I miss here is the old Italian way of suggesting intense quiet with a *pianissimo* that truly sounds. Pappano's tempo for the first 77 bars is not, by post-Toscanini standards, unduly slow yet on this occasion it is only with the arrival of the tenor's cry of "Kyrie" that the great musical journey really begins.

That apart, it is wonderful to hear the Requiem so memorably revealed as the dramatic and meditative masterpiece it clearly is.

Richard Osborne

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Gramophone Classical Music Guide 2010

ROUND UP

Getting a Handel on it

David Vickers sifts among the epic editions that are appearing during Handel's anniversary year

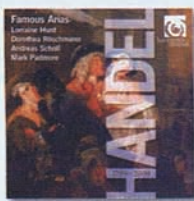
Cheap reissues of Handelian back catalogues will be good news for freshly converted fans eager to pick up as much as possible at bargain-basement prices. But do the economy pros of epic box-set ventures outweigh the cons? For some, Handel's works in all their charismatic diversity are homogenised and lose their independent personality when stuffed into an anonymous box. For example, Decca's "The Masterworks" crams the usual suspects – *Messiah* (Marriner's 1976 recording), *Israel in Egypt* (Cleobury and the Choir of King's College), the *Water Music* and the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (Marriner) – into a 30-disc set. But does



a large pile of discs in blandly uniform sleeves, with a single perfunctory booklet lacking sung texts, offer adequate justice to a listener's first experience of *Hercules*? Also, the inclusion of only one opera (*Giulio Cesare*) is an injustice to both composer and modern-day punter. Another drawback is that most longstanding Handelian will already have the best and most essential recordings included (Pinnock's *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, McCreesh's *Solomon*), and it does not seem helpful that such listeners should have to invest in an enormous box-set in order to have the less readily available contents (such as Simon Preston's enjoyable anthology of the Latin church music). One wonders how many well intentioned purchasers of such epic collections will methodically

plough through all of the 30 discs without adequate contextual information and works shorn of a documented identity. Nor is it a good service (or an impressive entrepreneurial concept) to reissue average performances that have already been reissued in a better form (eg the Academy of St Martin in the Fields' variable collection of chamber sonatas). It is difficult to avoid concluding that Decca's "Masterworks" gives long-term devotees nothing of substance and offers new Handelians only a poorly balanced and unhelpful gateway to the repertoire. It bespeaks artistic complacency; Universal Classics would have done better to reissue most of these recordings in separate volumes at budget price, especially those which have not been widely available on disc in recent years (the ASMF's complete survey of the concert grossi and organ concertos, with soloist George Malcolm, and Mackerras's solid account of *Judas Maccabaeus* featuring Janet Baker).

Some series of reissues are best avoided entirely, such as Berlin Classics' archaic and heavily Teutonic oratorio performances, sung in German translations (these are likely to give pleasure only to over-inquisitive musical masochists determined to find some silver linings around the plethora of black clouds). Even labels with impressive Handelian back catalogues do not get things right: Harmonia Mundi fails to reissue the best of its currently unavailable back catalogue in its anniversary celebration



series, each of which is a box devoted to a specific genre. The opera and oratorio collections entirely neglect award-winning performances by McGegan in favour of Jacobs's sensationalised (or, for some, irritatingly quirky and bowdlerised) performances. This seems strange because the original issues of Jacobs's recordings are recent and inexpensive, whereas many of McGegan's 1990s recordings are currently unavailable and deserve timely anniversary reissues. However, Harmonia Mundi's products are typically pleasing on the eye.

Warner's wholesale repackaging of Erato and Teldec recordings by Gardiner, Christie, Minkowski, Harmoncourt and others is somewhat pretentiously called "The Handel Edition" (as if it is somehow a definitive must-have). Issued in several boxed instalments, the disadvantage of binding the entire Warner-owned back catalogue together is that the decision to pump it all out has been made without adequate quality control. Harmoncourt has rarely been successfully sympathetic and effective in Handel's vocal works but the so-called "Handel Edition" is giving these a new lease of life that shall lure inexperienced collectors onto treacherous rocks. Harmoncourt's clumsily handled *Saul* is dreadful, but his accounts of *Alexander's Feast* and the *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* are both worth investigation (curiously, both feature the Stockholm Bach Choir rather than the Viennese choruses he



René Jacobs: sensational – or sensationalised – Handel

uses in all of his worst oratorio recordings). Also, Harmoncourt's vigorous interpretation of *Apollo e Dafne* has some merits, although it is a shame that the booklet recycles the inaccurate claim that the cantata was written for Naples (we know it was probably completed in Hanover). As with Decca's mammoth-sized "Masterworks", I'd much prefer to spend meaningful time with the separate recordings rather than with Warner's cobbled-together box-



sets. Warner's decision to reissue a number of its recordings of *Messiah* as separate volumes in the "Messiah Edition" is a better strategy, although its archive of patchy, mostly old-fashioned and laborious performances does not contain versions that will excite many apart from those determined to collect and compare every known recording of the oratorio.

Quality control was also a problem for Brilliant Classics' mammoth Handel "Masterworks" issued some years ago, but the label has replaced some of the worst

performances with finer things for the new 39-disc "A Handel Celebration". There is



still some spectacularly awful stuff: a live *Rinaldo* from La Fenice featuring Marilyn Horne is painful, and four performances of oratorio-style works are directed by Somary in the most lifeless and soggy manner possible. Crucially, the wide range of repertoire chosen by Brilliant Classics is far better and more interesting than Decca's: some of the licensed recordings are excellent (L'Ecole d'Orphée's complete six-disc survey of Handel's chamber music; a fine Dutch performance of

the Coronation Anthems conducted by Willcocks), and a few of Brilliant's own original recordings are enjoyable (Michael Borgstede's exploration of the harpsichord suites, Marco Vitale's lovely *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo*). The fine performance of *Messiah* by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and the



Brandenburg Consort is a live recording made in Leiden (a DVD of the concert is also included), but discographical boffins should note that it is not the same performance as that issued on Argo (recorded in the chapel at King's at around the same period). ☉

The Recordings

- **Handel Masterworks Various artists**
Decca Ⓢ (30 discs) 478 1190
- **Handel Oratorios Various artists**
Berlin Classics Ⓢ (20 discs in seven sets) 018465/72-2BC
- **Handel Anniversary Edn Various artists**
Harmonia Mundi Ⓢ (4 sets) HMX290 8280/95
- **Handel Edition Various artists**
Warner Classics Ⓢ (62 discs in 11 sets)
- **Handel Messiah Edition Various artists**
Warner Classics Ⓢ (10) (five two-CD sets)
- **Handel Handel Celebration Various artists**
Brilliant Classics Ⓢ (39 discs) 93877

Opera

Gergiev's Bluebeard • Brilliant Berlioz • Tragédiennes, part deux

Bartók

Bluebeard's Castle

Elena Zhidkova *mez* Judith
Sir Willard White *bass-bar* Bluebeard
London Symphony Orchestra / Valery Gergiev
LSO Live @ LSO0685
(59' • DDD/DS • S/T/v/N)
Recorded live at the Barbican Hall, London, in
January 2009

Selected comparisons:

Hungarian St Op Orch, Ferencsik (7/86) (HUNG) HCD12254-2
LSO, Kertész (4/95) (DECC) 466 377-2DM
BPO, Haitink (9/96) (EMI) 556162-2

For the perfect introduction to Bartók's Bluebeard look no further



Most recordings of *Bluebeard's Castle* have their pivotal moments. With Péter Eötvös (Hänssler), it's the soul-scarring cry as Bluebeard, masterfully sung by Péter Fried, opens

the door to his torture chamber. István Kertész, whose 1965 LSO recording for Decca is still a benchmark of sorts, triumphs at the fifth door where Christa Ludwig stands awestruck at the sudden revelation of Bluebeard's domain. With Valery Gergiev, the pivotal moment is the sombre burbling of the lake of tears (at the start of tr 7) where Judith is transfixed by the water's unearthly hush and Bluebeard explains, "tears, my Judith, tears, tears...". Gergiev sustains a pretty slow tempo while clarinet and low strings embrace both protagonists with long, expressive lines. The opera's later episodes, such as the accelerating blood-rush as Judith susses the shocking truth (Gergiev and his players are on tremendous form here), Bluebeard pondering his past wives and the overwhelming moment when Judith at last joins them, all suggest similar levels of thoughtfulness, sense of theatre and sensitivity to mood.

Interestingly, the Prologue is spoken in English (by Sir Willard himself) whereas the opera is sung, as it must be for its true musical effect to register properly, in Hungarian. White does fairly well with Hungarian though his vibrato tends to widen a little under pressure. Elena Zhidkova isn't the most seductive of Judiths – she sounds a mite too needy for my tastes – and like White, the beat of her vibrato can be distracting, but she acts well and her singing generates considerable intensity. Gergiev keeps the Prologue on the move but I missed an element of shock as the first door reveals the torture chamber. The damp-squib effect is further underlined by Zhidkova's rather faint "Ja" [Woe]. The castle's armoury, too,

hardly inspires fear or terror, but Gergiev comes into his own when delving among Bluebeard's treasures, a brightly glistening blend of sonorities, and basking in his fragrant gardens. The fifth door is spoiled somewhat by Zhidkova entering fractionally off cue, but the panoramic impact of the LSO's playing partially compensates.

As to placing Gergiev among his rivals, I'd suggest that Haitink (with von Otter and Tomlinson) is marginally more moving and Kertész (with Ludwig and Berry) more alluring. And then there's the joy of hearing Mihály Székely and Klára Palánky dancing around the Hungarian language as no one else quite manages, with János Ferencsik conducting (for Hungaroton, in mono). But why have we in the UK still never had Iván Fischer's Budapest Festival recording of *Bluebeard*, not necessarily the best-sung, but certainly one of the best conducted? I'm puzzled.

If comparisons are less of the essence than hopping aboard an operatic masterpiece for the first time then rest assured, Gergiev, his orchestra and his singers offer good accounts of themselves and, by extension, of Bartók too. **Rob Cowan**

Berlioz

Les Troyens (sung in English)

Blanche Thebom *mez* Dido
Jon Vickers *ten* Aeneas
Amy Shuard *sop* Cassandra
Jess Walters *bar* Corebus
Lauris Elms *mez* Anna
David Kelly *bass* Narbal
Michael Langdon *bass* Panthus
Joan Carlyle *sop* Ascanius
Richard Verreau *ten* Iopas
Forbes Robinson *bass* Priam
Noreen Berry *contr* Hecuba
Dermot Troy *ten* Hylas
Edgar Evans *ten* Helenus
Joseph Rouleau *bass* Ghost of Hector
Robert Allman *bar* Greek Captain
Alan Beale *bar* Mercury
Covent Garden Opera Chorus and Orchestra /
Rafael Kubelík
Testament mono © 4 SBT4 1443 (3h 45' • ADD)
Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent
Garden, on June 20, 1957. Also includes Jon
Vickers in conversation with Jon Tolansky,
recorded 1998

A great performance of a historic production of Berlioz's masterpiece

This 1957 production of Berlioz's epic five-act opera was the first modern attempt to stage the whole work in one evening at a major house. As David Cairns, Berlioz's biographer, points out in his booklet essay, the production had been preceded in Britain by efforts, some of them amateur ones, to come to grips with what many people had said was impossible. Sir David



Webster, the pioneering manager of Covent Garden, and the then musical director, Rafael Kubelík, had set their hearts on bringing the work to the stage in as

complete a form as possible. Sir John Gielgud was the director, and it must be in some measure due to his influence that the diction of all concerned is so clear, declaiming Edward Dent's translation.

It is difficult not to approach this historic broadcast without some feeling of awe. There was no tradition of performing the work in modern France (indeed, it had never been performed there complete). The material available, long before any definitive edition had been made, was in poor condition, and in some instances inaccurate. Everyone involved was approaching his or her role for the first time. Yet from the moment Amy Shuard as Cassandra utters "The Greeks have quit the plane", one is gripped by the recording, the performance and, as always, above all the work itself.

Shuard was on the threshold of her international career then. She made hardly any commercial recordings but in recent years several off-the-air issues have emerged, of which this is one of the most vivid. Blanche Thebom, as Dido, does not immediately make such an impact, yet by the time the love duet, "O sweet night", is reached one is captivated by her warm personality. Jon

'It is difficult not to approach this historic broadcast without some feeling of awe'

Vickers's Aeneas is well known: he recorded the role complete and in French some 12 years later for Sir Colin Davis (Philips, 12/86); here, singing in English, and more youthful-sounding, he makes a superbly positive hero. His great aria in the final act, "There is no turning back", is one of the many highlights of the set. There are so many other names that might be singled out, but suffice to say that the whole is a fine souvenir of the Covent Garden ensemble in that time. The sound is adequate for a 52-year-old tape (splendidly remastered by Paul Bailey). I suppose this must be of interest principally to English-speaking listeners, but those from other countries – even France – may find themselves swept along, above all by Kubelík's command of this grandest of all French operas. **Patrick O'Connor**

Puccini

'Ritrovato'

La Rondine – Ed ora bevo all'amor!; Parigi è la città dei desideri. **Madama Butterfly** – Con onor muore.**Edgar** – Act 1, Prelude; Sia benedetto il giorno; Evviva le coppe colmate!... La coppa è simbol della vita.**Manon Lescaut** – Sola perduta; Act 3, Prelude (original version, Part 1). **La fanciulla del West** – Oh, se qualcuno vuol quell' oro! **Suor Angelica** – Amici fiori. Preludio a Orchestra. Adagietto **Plácido Domingo** ten **Violeta Urmana** mez with ^aAnna Maria dell'Oste sop ^bAlfredo Nigro, ^aStefano Secco ^{ten}s Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Alberto Veronesi **DG** © 477 7455GH (63' • DDD • T/t)**A surprisingly scholarly and beautifully performed disc of Puccini rarities**No *Bohème*, no *Tosca*, no *Turandot* – this is definitely not another disc of Puccini's greatest hits, but a fascinating delve into mostly unfamiliar second thoughts or earlier versions

of some key moments in the composer's output.

The earliest item here is the charming orchestral Prelude from 1876, when Puccini was a student in Lucca. Even then, when he was only 18 years old, the style is recognisable. We then leap forward 44 years to the second version of *La Rondine*, altered by Puccini for the work's first performance in Vienna. Here the second tenor, Prunier, was re-cast as a baritone. The gorgeous melody of the Act 2 quartet, possibly the best ensemble in all his oeuvre, in this version (reconstructed by Michael Kaye) gives even more prominence to the soprano line. Then *Butterfly's* death from the 1904 La Scala premiere. This is more drawn-out than the familiar solo, unbearable, I'd have thought, for the soprano after such a gruelling evening; Pinkerton's voice is not heard. The longest item, and the biggest surprise, is the duet from *Edgar* in its 1889 original form. Here a pre-echo of Act 3 of *Tosca* is vividly heard.

The beautiful Prelude to Act 1 of *Edgar* precedes two earlier versions of passages from *Manon Lescaut*: the Prelude to the original Act 3, really lovely, using the melody of Manon's "L'ora, o Tirsi", and then "Sola, perduta", substantially different in form, although the main theme is as usual.

The two arias that will be familiar to many listeners are "Parigi è la città dei desideri" from the 1920 *La Rondine*, and *Suor Angelica's* "Amici fiori". (Lotte Lehmann recorded this, I think, at the time of the first Vienna *Trittico*.) Although Plácido Domingo's name is, naturally, given equal billing with that of Violeta Urmana, he only sings on three of the tracks (*La Rondine* and *Edgar*). Urmana concludes the recital with the exhilarating aria with chorus from *Edgar*, "Evviva le coppe colmate!". The Vienna forces under Alberto Veronesi accompany with gusto. A most enterprising and scholarly issue, which is also a great pleasure to listen to. **Patrick O'Connor**

EDITOR'S CHOICE**Veronique Gens:**
tragedy and triumph**'Tragédiennes 2'**

'From Rameau to Berlioz'

Arriaga *Hermine* – Mais sur cette arène guerrière... Il n'est plus... Dieux cruels **Berlioz** *Les Troyens* – Les Grecs ont disparu... Malheureux Roi **Cherubini** *Médée* – Ah! Nos peines seront communes **Gluck** *Alceste* – Grands dieux soutenez mon courage... Ah! Divinités implacables. *Orphée et Eurydice* – Air de *Furies*; Ballet des ombres heureuses **Grétry** *Andromache* – C'est le seul espoir qui me reste... Si fidèle au noeud qui l'engage **Piccini** *Didon* – Non, ce n'est plus pour moi **Rameau** *Les Paladins* – Menuets I & II; Entrée très gaye de *Troubadours*; Triste séjour; *Sarabande* **Sacchini** *Oedipe à Colone* – Dieux, ce n'est pas pour moi que ma voix vous implore. *Dardanus* – Il me fuit... Rien ne peut émouvoir; Cesse cruel amour de régner sur mon âme. *Renaud* – Hélas vous le dirais-je... Ah! Que dis-tu

Veronique Gens sop**Les Talens Lyriques** / **Christophe Rousset**
Virgin Classics © 216574-2 (67' • DDD • T/t)

Despite determined efforts by many musicians in France and elsewhere in the last 40 years, no French opera of the 17th or 18th century – other than those by Gluck – has really re-established itself in the permanent repertory. This must be in part because the style is so elusive, except to specialists, and because the mixture of spectacle and high-flown drama is so difficult to pull off on stage – and isn't to the taste of sections of the modern audience. All the more reason, then, to welcome this second "Tragédiennes" volume from Veronique Gens and Christophe Rousset.

The music chosen ranges from the familiar to the extremely recherché. When was the last time anyone had an opportunity to see an opera by

Another splendid miscellany from Gens – including some rarely heard gems



Sacchini or Piccini? Three of Sacchini's *tragédies lyriques* are represented: *Renaud* (1783), *Dardanus* (1784) and *Oedipe à Colone* (1786). The short scene for *Antigone* from *Oedipe* is particularly impressive, the mood changing from prayer to a passionate declaration of intent as she vows to aid Oedipus in his sorrow.

Piccini's *Dido* seems to be just as tragic a figure as those of Purcell or Berlioz, and Grétry's *Andromaque* fumes against injustice with all the passion that one would expect. The band plays ballet music from Gluck's *Orphée* and Rameau's *Les Paladins*, the latter providing a bridge into the later works. I would not

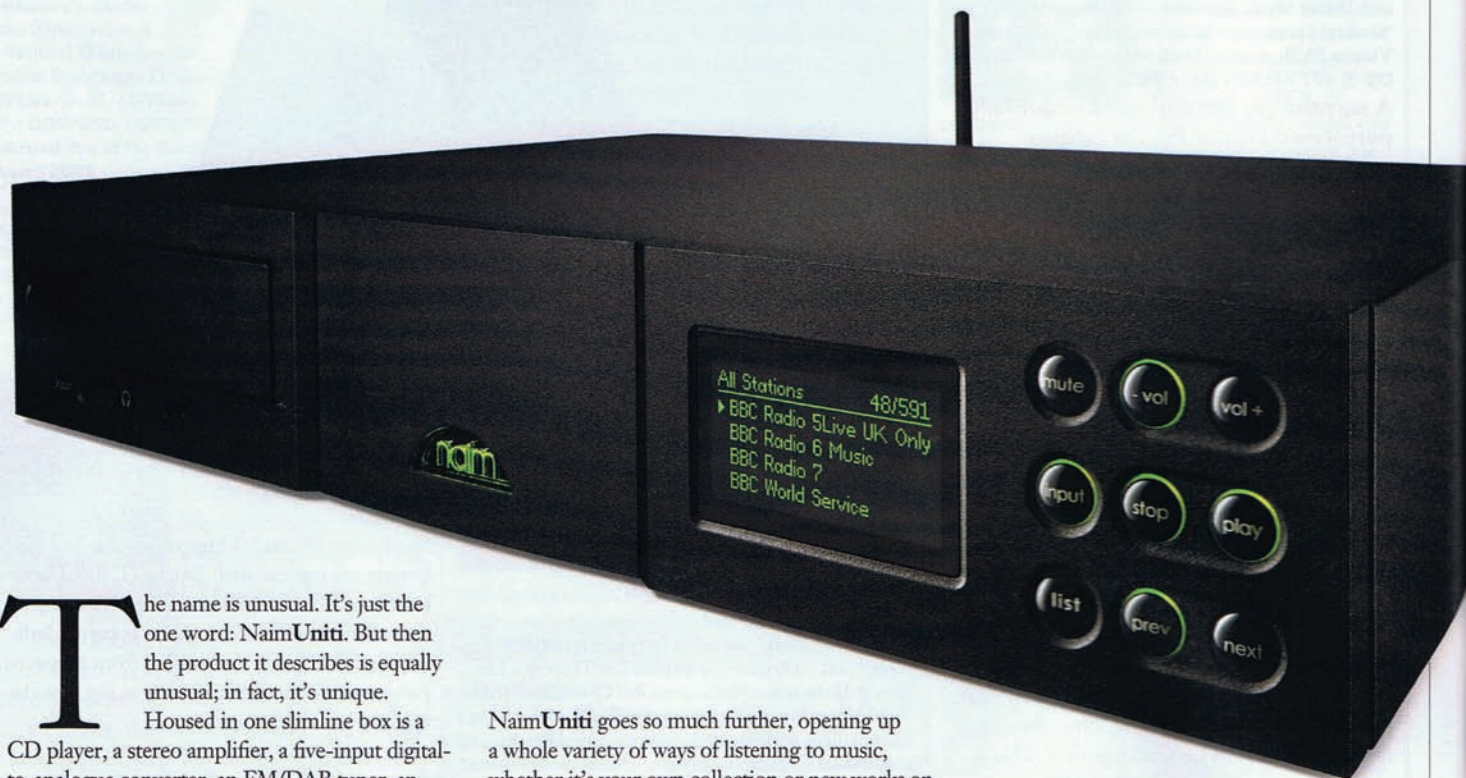
'This second Tragédiennes volume is easily equal to the first and that must be praise enough'

immediately have thought of Gens as an ideal interpreter of *Néris*, *Medea's* confidante in Cherubini's opera, but she sings the aria, with its lovely oboe obbligato, with quiet dignity. The rarest item of all is *Hermine*, a *scène lyrique* by Basque composer Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga, who was struck down at the age of only 20, becoming known as the Spanish Mozart. This second "Tragédiennes" volume is easily equal to the first and that must be praise enough.

Patrick O'Connor

Win the NaimUniti

In last month's issue we reviewed Naim's amazing all-in-one CD/wi-fi receiver, the Naim**Uniti**. It's worth over £2000, and you can win one!



The name is unusual. It's just the one word: Naim**Uniti**. But then the product it describes is equally unusual; in fact, it's unique.

Housed in one slimline box is a CD player, a stereo amplifier, a five-input digital-to-analogue converter, an FM/DAB tuner, an iPod dock (with the addition of an optional lead), and a wireless music streamer able to deliver both stored music and internet radio from a home network. It's an amazing product, and here you have the chance to win this sought-after all-in-one, complete with an n-Link iPod cable. That's a prize worth over £2000.

We tested the Naim**Uniti** last month, and to say our audio editor was rather taken with it is an understatement: "There's a very simple way to describe the way the Naim**Uniti** performs: it exceeds expectations in every area, and is quite likely to have anyone lucky enough to try it rethinking the whole way they listen to music."

At the heart of the system is a CD player derived from the company's CD5i and amplification based on the Nait 5i, each class-leaders in their respective fields. So that ensures the audio performance is excellent – but the

Naim**Uniti** goes so much further, opening up a whole variety of ways of listening to music, whether it's your own collection or new works on the radio or streamed via the internet.

Hand-built by Naim in Salisbury, this is the company's most technologically advanced product yet, featuring facilities previously unseen in the company's range. The digital-to-analogue conversion can be used to connect external sources such as computers and digital TV set-top boxes, the tuner covers both FM and DAB transmissions, and the wi-fi connectivity allows wireless access to music stored on a home computer or a network-attached drive, as well as opening up a whole world of radio stations streaming online, of which there are thousands.

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The closing date is Monday November 2, 2009

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The winning entry will be the first drawn at random after Monday November 2, 2009, and will be witnessed by an independent observer. The Publisher's decision is final and no correspondence shall be entered into. The winner's details will be passed on to Naim who are responsible for providing and organising delivery of the prize. The winner will be notified within 28 days of the draw. This promotion is not open to employees of Haymarket Media Group or Naim. Limited to one entry per household. Entrants must be 18 or over. No purchase of any sort is necessary. There is no cash alternative and the prize is non-transferable. Occasionally Gramophone magazine, Haymarket Media Group and Naim would like to contact you via post, phone or e-mail with future offers and product information which we think would be of interest to you. By entering this draw you are consenting to this. We also respect your privacy so if you do not wish to receive such information – write to us at: Data Controller, Haymarket Circulation, Haymarket Media Group, Broom Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9BE or e-mail datacontroller@haymarket.com, stating "Gramophone NaimUniti" in the subject line.

ROUND
UP

Remembering Lorraine

Patrick O'Connor surveys the key recordings of Lorraine Hunt Lieberson released since her tragic death

When an artist at the peak of their interpretative powers is suddenly struck down, even those who never knew them personally must feel keenly the unfairness, the inexplicable, tragic loss.



Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, who died in 2006 aged only 52, had also been a late starter. Her early career was as a viola-player, and that surely added to the intensity, the wonderfully direct and simple manner that she brought to the song repertoire. In opera she was able to call on a dramatic awareness that brought comparisons with the greatest divas of the past. But that was the one thing Lorraine Hunt Lieberson was not: she had no prima-donna instincts, no desire to be always centre stage. John Adams in his autobiography, *Hallelujah Junction*, writes: "She was a unique, profoundly charismatic performer, combining an enigmatic mystique with a concentrated emotional

power that drew the listener into her orbit and held him mesmerised." Adams had known her since the late 1970s, when she played the viola part in his *Shaker Loops*. It was Peter Sellars, in his groundbreaking productions at the New York Pepsico Festival, who first recognised and encouraged her stage abilities. In his introduction to the Wigmore Hall recital, Charles Michener quotes Sellars's reaction when he first heard her sing: "It was like being in a raging forest fire."

Although she recorded a good deal, there rests such a feeling of what might have been where Hunt Lieberson's art is concerned, that it is comforting that so many live recordings have been preserved and are now being issued on CD. No doubt there are others waiting to be tracked down. "Lorraine at Emmanuel" contrasts performances of two Bach arias with selections from Handel's *Hercules*. The disc is introduced by John Harbison, who composed the role of Myrtle for her in *The Great Gatsby* – Hunt Lieberson's Metropolitan Opera debut in 1999. The opening track, "Kommt ihr angefochtenen Sünder" from Bach's

Cantata No 30 has what Harbison calls a "special warmth...and emotional daring" that distinguished so much of her singing. The repeated phrases at "Euer Heiland ruft und schreit!" have such a quality of rapture allied to such beauty of tone and phrasing that anyone would surely be stopped in their tracks and wonder at this voice that seems to match the music at each moment. The Orchestra of Emmanuel Music is conducted by the late Craig Smith, with whom Lorraine Hunt Lieberson performed first in 1981, and then for the rest of her career. As Smith wrote, "the gentle dance rhythms are celestial and heavenly".

The other Bach aria, "Wie fürchsam wankten meine Schritte" from Cantata No 33, is conducted by Harbison. Both these are taken from performances in the early 1990s, from the regular Boston Sunday morning series over which Craig Smith presided. Dejanira's arias from *Hercules* were recorded at a performance in October 1999. Although not well received at its London premiere in 1745, *Hercules* is one of Handel's most startling works. The character of Dejanira, the wife of Hercules, provided Hunt Lieberson with a rich opportunity, vocal and dramatic, to show herself at turns proud, jealous, despairing and finally distraught, in the famous mad scene, "Where shall I fly?". Not only does she suggest all the shifting moods but in florid music proves herself a virtuoso in the great *bel canto* tradition. The Act 2 aria, accompanied by two violins, "When beauty sorrow's liv'ry wears" is as fine an account of this music as you are likely to encounter. As Craig Smith commented, Dejanira's music allows a view of "the many shades of the dark night of the soul".

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson: 'an enigmatic mystique'



The Wigmore Hall recital was recorded earlier the same month, and could hardly offer a greater contrast. Accompanied by Julius Drake, Hunt Lieberson sings a programme of Lieder by Brahms and Schumann that, although almost unrelenting in its yearning melancholy, shows another aspect of her art. "I don't know why, but sorrow comes naturally to me," Hunt Lieberson told Charles Michener, and in this recital from the grim sensuality, shocking in its time, of Daubert's poems set by Brahms in his Eight Songs, Op 57, to the contrasted innocence of Goethe's *Mignon* in Schumann's 1849 settings from *Wilhelm Meister* and then *Frauenliebe und*

and 2001. Subtitled "The Sonnets of Orpheus", here is music that speaks eloquently of love, of passion, of devotion, of happiness in the shared wonder of a life in art. Lieberson wrote of his wife's singing, "her instincts are fiery



and definite", and in some ways this cycle and recording must stand as the ultimate tribute to her approach to performance. What, though, of what John Adams calls her "free laughter and slightly ditty California-native manner"?



Turn to the recital of *Spanish Love Songs*, given in July 2004. Here, in a programme shared with tenor Joseph Kaiser, we encounter another aspect of her personality, playful, abandoned, and using her lower register in a sometimes flamenco-like way. Ravel's *Vocalise-Habanera*, the outrageous Chabrier *España*, Yradier's *La paloma* and even Stephen Sondheim's "Barcelona" from *Company* give us a Lorraine in holiday mood. ☺

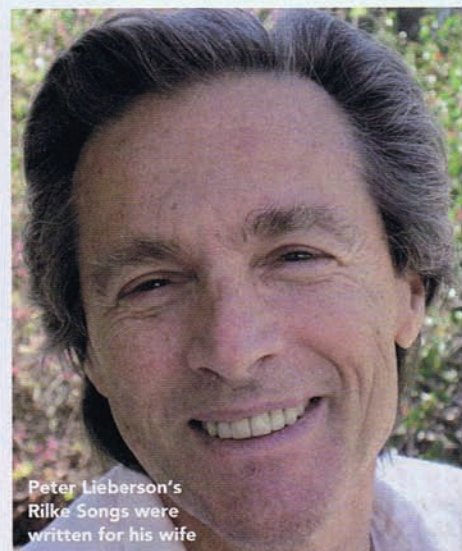


-Leben, we hear her ability to build a character just within a few phrases.

Peter Lieberson's *Rilke Songs* were composed for his wife between 1997

The Recordings

- **Bach, Handel** Lorraine at Emmanuel Orch of Emmanuel Music / C Smith, Harbison Avie Ⓜ AV2130
- **Brahms, Schumann** Lieder Drake Wigmore Hall Live Ⓜ WHLIVE0024
- **Lieberson** Rilke Songs Palma Bridge Ⓜ BRIDGE9178
- **Various Cpsrs** Spanish Love Songs Barrett Bridge Ⓜ BRIDGE9228



Peter Lieberson's *Rilke Songs* were written for his wife

THE FINALISTS

BAROQUE INSTRUMENTAL



Purcell Ten Sonatas in Four Parts Retranscribed by Linn (P) CDK332 (9/09)



Purcell The Complete Fantasias for Lute Harmonia Mundi (P) HMU70 7502 (9/09)



'The Rise of the North Italian Violin Concerto' Vol 3: The Golden Age La Scintille / Adrian Chandler (ten) Aviva (P) AV2154 (10/08)



Handel Acis & Galatea (Cannons 1718 version) Solists: Dorothea Cramer & Players / Juba Batt Linn (P) CDK319 (1/09)



Handel Coronation Anthems, etc The Sixteen / Harry Christophers Coro (P) COR16066 (4/09)



Lully Psyché Soliste Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra & Chorus / Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs CPO (P) CPO777 367-2 (10/08)



Brahms String Quartets - Op 51 No 1; Op 67 Tabors Quartet Hyperion (P) CDA67552 (12/08)



Debussy, Fauré, Ravel String Quartets Quatuor Ébène Virgin (P) 519045-2 (12/08)



Schumann Violin Sonatas Carina Waldmann (vi), Dénes Várjon (pf) ECM New Series (P) 476 6744 (A/08)

CHORAL



'A New Heaven' The Sixteen / Harry Christophers UCJ (P) 179 5732 (5/09)



Elgar The Dream of Gerontius Solists and Bryan Torrell (bass-bar), Claire, Halle Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder Halle (P) CDHLD7520 (1/09)



Fauré Requiem Sandrine Piau (sop), Stéphane Degout (bar), Accentus Chamber Choir, French National Orchestra / Laurence Equilley Naïve (P) VS137 (8/09)



Beethoven The Complete Piano Concertos Richard Goode (pf), Budapest Festival Orchestra / Jean Fischer Nonesuch (P) 7559 79928-3 (2/09)



Britten Piano Concerto Steven Osborne (pf), BBC Scottish SO / Iain Vail Hyperion (P) CDA67625 (10/08)



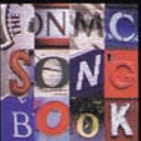
Mozart Violin Concertos Giuliano Carmignola (vi), Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado Archiv (P) 477 7371AH2 (9/08)



D. Matthews Orchestral Works Guy Johnston (c), BBC Philharmonic / Ruman Gamba Chandos (P) CHAN10487 (4/09)



Lindberg Orchestral Works Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Sakari Oramo Ondine (P) ODE1124-2 (2/09)

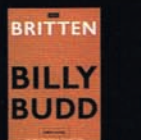


NMC Songbook Various artists NMC (P) NMCD150 (5/09)

DVD



Birtwistle The Minotaur Royal Opera / Antonio Pappano, directed by Stephen Langridge Opus Arte (P) OA10000 (1/09)



Britten Billy Budd LSO / Charles Mackerras, directed by Basil Coleman Decca (P) 3256DH (9/08)



Wagner Der Ring des Nibelungen Royal Danish Opera / Michael Schwanitz Decca (P) 3264DH (4/09)



Byrd I Hode Simon Petrus The Cardinals Music / Andrew Garwood Hyperion (P) CDA67653 (4/09)



'Song of Songs' Stile Antico Harmonia Mundi (P) HMU80 7489 (8/09)



Morales Magnificat, Motets, Lamentations Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice Hyperion (P) CDA67694 (11/08)



Berlioz Les Troyens Opéra de Paris / Rafael Kubelík Testament (P) SBT4 1443 (4/09)



R. Strauss Der Rosenkavalier Bavarian State Opera / Carlos Kleiber Orfeo d'Or (P) CS81 083D (4/09)



Wagner The Mastersingers of Nuremberg Solti's Wella Opera / Reginald Goodall Chandos (P) CHAN3148 (8/08)

HISTORIC REISSUE



'The Charming Maverick' Fritz Kreisler EMI (P) 265042-2 (8/09)



'Composers in Person' Various artists EMI (P) 221757-2 (2/09)



'The Record of Singing, Vols 1-4' Various artists EMI (P) 228756-2 (3/09)



Debussy Complete Works for Piano, Vol 4 Jean-Efflam Marcet Chandos (P) CHAN10497 (12/08)



Debussy Piano Works Nelson Freire Decca (P) 478 1111DH (4/09)



Rachmaninov Preludes Steven Osborne Hyperion (P) CDA67700 (6/09)



Bellini I Capuleti e i Montecchi Soliste and Anna Neri (sop), Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Fabio Luisi DG (P) 477 8031GH2 (3/09)



Britten Owen Wingrave Soliste; City of London Sinfonia / Richard Hickox Chandos (P) CHAN10473 (9/08)



Puccini Madama Butterfly Soliste and Angela Gheorghiu (sop), Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Antonio Pappano EMI (P) 264187-2 (3/09)

ORCHESTRAL



Beethoven Symphonies Nos 2 & 7 Minnesota Orchestra / Osmo Vänskä BIS (P) BIS-SACD1816 (1/09)



Mahler Symphony No 4 Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer Channel Classics (P) CCSSA26109 (4/09)



Tchaikovsky Manfred Symphony Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko Naxos (P) 8 570568 (1/09)



'Cielo e mar' Rolando Villazón (ten), Verdi Symphony Orchestra / Daniele Callegari DG (P) 477 7224GH (7/08)



Haydn Italian Arias Thomas Quasthoff (bass-bar), Freiburg Baroque Orchestra / Gottfried von der Goltz DG (P) 477 7469GH (4/09)



Martinů Julietta Fragments Magdalena Kožená (mez), Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Charles Mackerras Supraphon (P) SU3794-2 (6/09)



Brahms, Schumann Lieder Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (mez), Julius Drake (pf) Wigmore Hall Live (P) WHLVE0024 (1/09)



Schumann Dichterliebe and other Heine Settings Gerald Finley (bar), Hyperion (P) CDA67676 (11/08)



'Songs My Mother Taught Me' Magdalena Kožená (sop) and Friends DG (P) 477 6665GH (A/08)

RECITAL



Brahms, Schumann Lieder Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (mez), Julius Drake (pf) Wigmore Hall Live (P) WHLVE0024 (1/09)



Schumann Dichterliebe and other Heine Settings Gerald Finley (bar), Hyperion (P) CDA67676 (11/08)



'Songs My Mother Taught Me' Magdalena Kožená (sop) and Friends DG (P) 477 6665GH (A/08)

Musical theatre

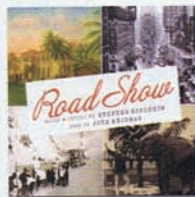
Stephen Sondheim's Road Show • Evelyn Laye, queen of musical comedy

Sondheim

Road Show

Michael Cerveris *sng* Wilson Mizner
Alma Cuervo *sng* Mama Mizner
Claybourne Elder *sng* Hollis Bessemer
Alexander Gemignani *sng* Addison Mizner
William Parry *sng* Papa Mizner
ensemble / Mary-Mitchell Campbell *kybds*
Nonesuch © 7559 79824-9 (65' • DDD • T)

Road Show contains moments of magic but they are few and far between



The long gestation of *Road Show* – formally *Wise Guys*, *Gold and Bounce* (which was also recorded by Nonesuch/PS Classics) – could eventually catch up with the 40-year time span

of the show if Sondheim were not finally to let it go, once and for all. That's a joke, of course, but it hasn't escaped the great man's notice that the show itself has become a metaphor for the long and winding road of the Mizner Brothers' family saga.

It always appealed to Sondheim that these real-life, larger-than-life characters (one more fallible than the other) represented the yin and yang of sibling relationships, not to say the flip sides of that elusive American dream. But rich though it is as a concept, the show in both its incarnations (*Bounce* made it as far as Washington DC) has never really gelled. Interesting that it has got progressively smaller on its journey to New York where it briefly

'Rich though it is as a concept, the show in both its incarnations has never really gelled'

played at the Public Theatre under the direction of John Doyle. The show may have gotten smaller but its impact hasn't gotten bigger.

As ever with Sondheim, the play's the thing (book: John Weidman) with dialogue kind of osmosing into song, most of it redolent of the whistle-stop, snapshot, energy of the narrative. I can't say I much enjoyed *Road Show* when I saw it in New York – the raciness of its exposition doesn't allow for much engagement with the characters until the very final scene. There's a breathless imperative about it all. Moments of reflection – like the mother's song "Isn't he something!" (the stand-out song) – are few and far

between. Rather more troubling for me – and this is accentuated when the score is divorced from the show – is the extent to which, musically speaking, it sounds more and more like a self-parody of Sondheim. That's primarily because there are so many echoes of the score which Sondheim was working on when he began penning this one – that is, *Assassins*. Papa Mizner's song "It's in your hands now" is a dead ringer for John Wilkes Booth's monologue in the earlier show.

Jonathan Tunick's piano and wind-band-led orchestrations work well, with a touch of Stravinskian acerbity about them, and there's a wistfully harmonised number, "The best thing that has ever happened", which makes magic of a monotone while doffing its hat at Harold Arlen. But despite my overriding disappointment comes that searing last duet between Alexander Gemignani (Addison Mizner) and Michael Cerveris (Wilson Mizner) and fleetingly you are in the hands of a master.

Sondheim has called *Road Show* the longest out-of-town try-out in Broadway history. Maybe some things are just destined to stay on the road.

Edward Seckerson

Evelyn Laye

'Queen of Musical Comedy'

Includes works by Addinsell, Ayer, N Brown, Coward, Darby, Elgar, Gay, Loewe, Heneker, Kern, Lehár, Noble, Novello, Popplewell, Romberg, Schwartz, Sondheim, Spoliansky, J Strauss II, O Straus, Tchaikovsky and Verdi
Evelyn Laye *sop* with various artists
Avid mono © 2 AMSC977 (158' • ADD)

A fine tribute to Evelyn Laye, the incomparable queen of musical comedy



Glancing over the contents of this sumptuous collection one is inevitably pulled up short by the dates: Evelyn Laye – "Queen of Musical Comedy" – reigned from the 1920s to the 1990s, with the recordings here spanning an astonishing 71 years. And we talk of Elaine Paige as England's "first lady of musical theatre".

Laye was described by the legendary Austrian film director Max Reinhard as "that rare and Holy Trinity of the stage, a great singer, a great actress, and a great beauty". She began in variety – a Gaiety Girl at 17 – and she never really left the West End, except, of course, for her sojourns on Broadway and in Hollywood. The first and last things we hear in this collection is the

number that became her enduring signature tune – "I'll see you again" from Noel Coward's *Bitter Sweet*. She never did play the show in the West End, despite Noel's implorations, on account that it was presented by Charles B Cochran who had paired her husband Sonnie Hale with Jessie Matthews, thus beginning one of show business's most notorious affairs and ending her marriage. But she could not resist "the part of a lifetime" and played it across the pond to great acclaim. Rarely had a show title proved more fitting.

So what do we have here? Well, much that is familiar and treasurable, including the song that was written expressly for her by Sigmund Romberg and Oscar Hammerstein, "When I grow too old to dream" (in both her recorded versions, studio and soundtrack) which aches with nostalgia and shows off that pristine operetta voice of hers with its ingratiating *portamenti* and

'Laye reigned from the 1920s to the 1990s with the recordings here spanning an astonishing 71 years'

what can only be described as a charmingly old-fashioned way of drawing her audience closer in the hushed intimacy of the reprise. That was very much a stylistic gesture of the times.

But it's the novelties and rarities here – many never previously released – that will appeal to the connoisseurs: wartime appearances with ENSA including a charged "Land of Hope and Glory" at Drury Lane in 1940 and "Love is my reason" at the Navy barracks in Chatham, Kent; a late appearance – her last in a stage musical – as Madame Armfeldt in Stephen Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, where (despite muddy sound) she twinkles devilishly recalling her "Liaisons"; she does so again, this time with Harry Secombe, in a concert rendering of "I remember it well" from *Gigi* (she was 84 and remembered it very well); and a sweet impromptu sounding reprise of "If you were the only girl in the world" with Roy Hudd.

Most touching of all, though, are her last recordings in the studio. She was 91 and had lost none of her comic timing in a song by John Dalby, "Where have I put my glasses?" (her comic touch is too rarely celebrated) and an incomparably moving trifle, "Thank You", where she effectively signs off from her loyal audience keeping it simple and discreet and, as was her way, so heartfelt. **Edward Seckerson**

DVD

A portrait of Philip Glass • Discovering Delius • Hickox conducts Purcell

Beethoven • Grieg

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 3^aGrieg Piano Concerto^b

Emil Gilels *pf* Philharmonia Orchestra; ^bFinnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Paavo Berglund
Video Artists International © DVD VAIDVD4472
(86' • 4:3 • PCM mono • 0)

Recorded live in ^b1983, ^a1984

Gilels's Grieg is a little heavy-handed but these are diverting performances



This is the seventh volume from VAI of live performances of the great Russian pianist. It is sourced from two broadcasts by YLE, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, which in visual terms is a good deal better than its

Soviet counterpart, though if you insist on crisp colours and high definition you must look elsewhere: the second (?) generation picture quality boasts a characteristic hue of various shades of predominantly murky browns, greens and greys. No matter – the sound is fine.

As to the performances, it may be significant that whereas there are around 10 different commercially available accounts of Gilels in Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, there is only one of the Grieg (on Tahra, live with the Concertgebouw and Jochum in 1979, which

'Gilels in familiar and unfamiliar territory: never less than stimulating and of vital interest'

I have not heard). The Beethoven is impressive without being outstanding (unlike, for example, Gilels's incomparable Beethoven Fourth with Leopold Ludwig) with sharply contrasted episodes, eloquently clear phrasing, unhurried tempi – the second movement lasts nearly 11 minutes – and not a few smudges in the finale. The genial Paavo Berglund offers rock-steady support.

In the Grieg, the two outer movements seem to me altogether too portentous and heavy-handed. Grieg himself, according to Percy Grainger who studied the work with the composer, played tempi that "were faster than those usually heard in performances by...other artists" and that "the note of passion that he sounded was of a restless and feverish rather than of a violent nature". Gilels makes the work

sound like Tchaikovsky and in passages like the concluding *poco più allegro* of the first movement is decidedly flat-footed. There are, also, rather too many *tutti* downbeats where conductor and soloist fail to coincide (*vide* first crotchet, bar 2). In mitigation there is an exquisitely played *Adagio*. This is repeated as an encore after the enthusiastic reception by the Helsinki audience.

So – Gilels in familiar and unfamiliar territory: never less than stimulating and of vital interest. As is customary from this label, there are no notes on the music or performers on the assumption, I imagine, that those who buy this DVD either won't need any or won't care about their absence. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Delius

'Discovering Delius – A Portrait of Frederick Delius (1862-1934)'. Includes contributions from Sir Charles Mackerras, Julian Lloyd Webber, Tasmin Little, Thomas Hampson and the Brindisi Quartet

Directed and narrated by Derek Bailey
Digital Classics © DVD DCD1009DC
(60' • 4:3 • PCM stereo • 0)

Discover Delius through this gentle and moving introduction to his music



Derek Bailey's 1993 film for the Delius Trust offers a gentle introduction to the life and music of Fritz Delius (as he was known until 1902). The life chronology, however, is muddling. Nine minutes in and we are already

covering Delius's final years via a clip of Max Adrian and Christopher Gable in Ken Russell's unforgettable 1962 film, before being whisked back to Norwegian fjords and Paris student days. Of one thing we are left in no doubt: England and English music were not for Delius, and, as we are told in the opening sequence (the Brindisi Quartet visiting the Delius Trust in Britannia Street, London), he did not see himself as an English composer. The Bradford-born son of a wealthy first-generation German wool merchant, he left for Florida as soon as he was able in order to manage an orange plantation (the film skimps on the influence – and the fascinating story – of Thomas F Ward, the gifted musician who Delius chanced to meet in Jacksonville and who was an immense influence on him). After America came Scandinavia, Leipzig (where he befriended Grieg), Paris and Italy before Grez-sur-Loing, France, where he lived for the last 40 years of his life.

The film is valuable for the contributions of two musicians sadly no longer with us: Eric Fenby (*d*1997), Delius's amanuensis from 1928,

and the critic Felix Aprahamian (*d*2005) who, at the time of filming, was one of only four people left alive to have visited Delius at Grez-sur-Loing. Robert Threlfall, longtime custodian of the Delius Trust reveals, somewhat horrifyingly, that Beecham, Delius's foremost champion, entered his own performance directions in ineradicable blue crayon directly onto Delius's manuscript scores.

Here, too, are the young(er) Thomas Hampson, Tasmin Little and Julian Lloyd Webber. The latter plays part of the Cello Sonata using the very same instrument on which Delius first heard the work; Little, beautifully

'Beecham entered his own performance directions in ineradicable blue crayon on to Delius's manuscript scores'

expressive as she is in part of the Violin Concerto, is particularly moving as she speaks of what she believes to be Delius's great lost loves – a negro girl and the son she bore him – and the effect this had on his music thereafter with its constant "yearning for the unattainable".

Jeremy Nicholas

Furrer

Begehren

Petra Hoffmann *sop* Johann Leutgeb *spkr*
NOVA Vocal Ensemble; Recherche Ensemble / Beat Furrer

Stage director Reinhild Hoffmann

Kairos © DVD KAI0012792

(146' • 16:9 • PCM stereo and 5.1 • 0)

Furrer's fusion of music and theatre captivates but the staging is predictable



Sometimes it feels like every composer needs to get an Orpheus opera out of their system, but Beat Furrer's *Begehren* comes with trimmings. His libretto combines Ovid's and Virgil's accounts of the Orpheus myth interwoven with a montage of "classic" modernist texts by Hermann Broch, Cesare Pavese and Günter Eich. Orpheus and Euridice are represented by two characters labelled, with a Beckettian sense of existentialism, HE and SHE – and as HE works from speech towards song, SHE moves in the opposite direction.

The first word intoned is "shadows", and the "shh" sound is instantaneously scattered around

the chorus and across the instrumental ensemble, which must abandon conventional technique for breathy nuance and scritchy-scratchy white noise. Furrer describes his opera as "fusing spoken text with instrumental sound", the point being that the sound of the text becomes the music, while the music develops the

'The sound of the text becomes the music, while the music develops the sound of the text'

sound of the text. Anyone looking for a narrative representation will be frustrated: Furrer's fusion makes for a theatre of abstract sound that transcends storytelling by placing the audience inside the nervous system of the characters.

Kairos issued a CD version in 2006 and this DVD documents that same 2003 Graz performance. Furrer's score is such a purist sound-object that actually the CD is perfectly adequate. Reinhold Hoffmann's stage production is wholly of our time – oblique raised corners on the stage and minimalist white costumes are more humdrum than the music. More inspiring is Furrer's achievement at creating a theatre-piece in which music and theatre operate at the same elevated level, and if either element is taken away, there's no longer a piece.

Philip Clark

Handel

Semele

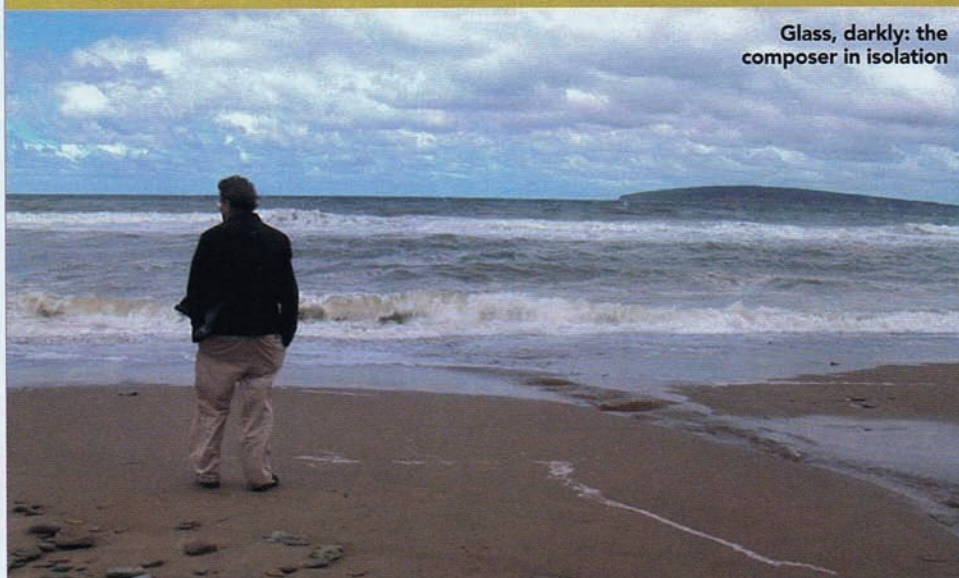
Cecilia Bartoli *mez*.....Semele
Charles Workman *ten*.....Jupiter
Birgit Remmert *mez*.....Juno
Liliana Nikiteanu *sop*.....Ino
Anton Scharinger *bar*.....Cadmus; Somnus
Thomas Michael Allen *ten*.....Athamas
Isabel Rey *sop*.....Iris
Chorus of the Zürich Opera House;
La Scintilla / William Christie
Stage director Robert Carsen
Video director Felix Breisach
Decca ② DVD 074 3323; ③ 074 3326 (154'
• NTSC • 16:9 • PCM Stereo and DTS 5.1 • 0)
Recorded live at the Opera House, Zürich, in
January 2007

Cecilia Bartoli's first Handel role on DVD is a disappointing affair



Robert Carsen's staging of *Semele* as a sort of modern-day British Royal Family scandal fresh from the pages of *Hello!* was first unveiled at Aix-en-Provence in 1996, and since then has paid its dues with several revivals. English National Opera's 1999 revival conducted by Harry Bicket had a near-perfect cast including Rosemary Joshua, John Mark Ainsley, Susan Bickley and Sarah Connolly, and was broadcast on BBC television. It was a humorous yet generally sympathetic ►

DVD OF THE MONTH



Glass, darkly: the composer in isolation



If you want to know what makes a great composer tick, look no further



Glass

'A Portrait of Philip in 12 Parts'

Film director Scott Hicks

Drakes Avenue ② DVD DAP7768

(115' • 16:9 • 2.0 and 5.1 • 0)

Extra features include Director's Commentary, Extended Interviews, Trailer and Deleted Scenes

During the past 25 years Glass has become the subject of a number of documentaries, ranging from Peter Greenaway's *Four American Composers* in 1983 to the more recent *Looking Glass*, directed by Eric Darmon. Such has been the interest in this popular yet controversial figure that the Sky Arts channel devoted an entire week to his music during his 70th year (2007). Scott Hicks's documentary dates from around this time and, unlike previous films (which have tended to concentrate on Glass's public persona), provides a fascinating and often revealing glimpse into the composer's personal and private life.

Hicks's film ostensibly portrays Glass as the gregarious, affectionate family man. There are interviews with close family and friends, and we get to see the composer relaxing in the kitchen, chopping garlic and making vegetarian pizza, entertaining friends while on retreat in one of his many rural dwellings, or going out on walks with his wife and kids. Fascinating insights are also provided by those who have worked professionally with Glass, not least by film directors such as Errol Morris, Godfrey Reggio and Woody Allen. And the downtown New

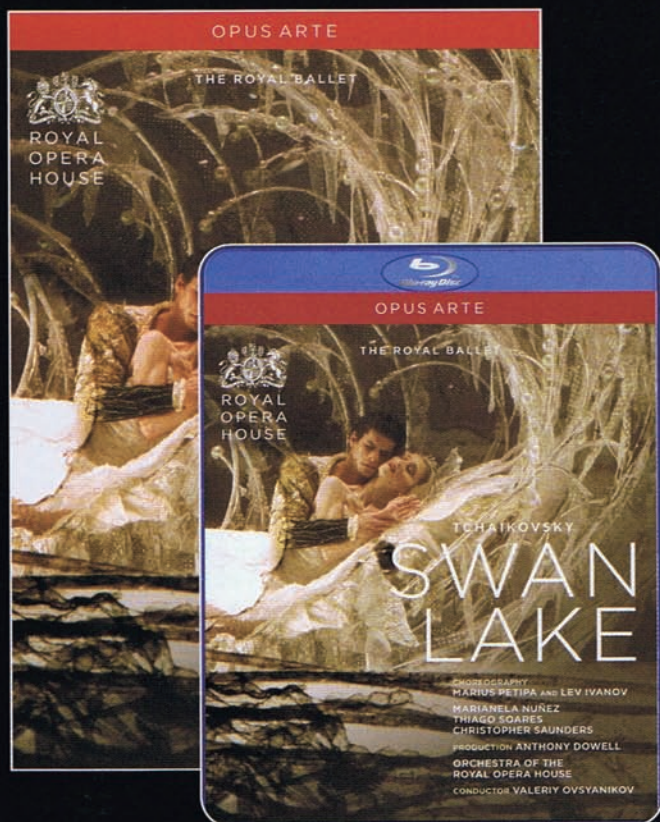
York scene that fostered and developed Glass's talents in the early 1970s is vividly contextualised.

But the camera lens also reveals a different and altogether more uncomfortable reality. When Glass is not jet-setting across the globe either performing, recording and promoting his music, or receiving spiritual counselling sessions from Buddhists and Shamanists, his workaholic habits result in long periods of self-imposed

'For Glass himself, one suspects that Hicks's film would make for rather uncomfortable viewing'

isolation from his family. What is gradually uncovered as the film shifts through its 12 parts is the composer's overwhelming sense of self-focus and obsessive desire to succeed, and the increasing strain this places on a close-knit network of people who appear to do little else other than attend to his every need and wish.

For Glass himself, one suspects that Hicks's film would make for rather uncomfortable viewing at times; but in a strange way, this is also what makes it so compelling. Glass's music is reflected in the very nature of his life – repetitively structured, mechanically controlled, totally determined. Yet one cannot help but admire the man's resolute purposefulness and drive. In making a film about Glass, Hicks has successfully shown what makes all great composers tick. **Pwyll ap Siôn**



TCHAIKOVSKY *Swan Lake* THE ROYAL BALLET

Yolanda Sonnabend's Faberge-inspired designs evoke a world of Imperial Russia in Anthony Dowell's acclaimed production for The Royal Ballet of one of the world's best-loved ballets. Marianela Núñez as Odette/Odile and Thiago Soares as Prince Siegfried bring new vitality to a compelling story of tragic romance. The Russian conductor Valeriy Ovsyanikov directs the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House in Tchaikovsky's lush romantic score.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde*

Glyndebourne's celebrated production of Nikolaus Lehnhoff's *Tristan und Isolde* is a supremely intelligent achievement. Nina Stemme's Isolde and Robert Gambill's Tristan, both gloriously lyrical, are matched by superb performances from René Pape as the betrayed and vulnerable King Marke and Bo Skovhus as Kurwenal, deeply touching in his helpless devotion to Tristan.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY



DELIBES *Sylvia*

Darcey Bussell and Roberto Bolle star in Frederick Ashton's *Sylvia*, restored to the splendour of its elegant and opulent three-act form for the 75th anniversary celebrations of The Royal Ballet. Taken from Greek mythology, it tells the story of Sylvia, loved by Aminta, abducted by Orion and eventually rescued by Eros. *Sylvia* is a wonderful showcase for virtuosity, invention and classical beauty.

AVAILABLE ON DVD & BLU-RAY

production, and, although the ENO Chorus bulged and sagged at times, the cast of singers knew how to deliver their words, understood how to act Handel's characters and how to sing the music engagingly and eloquently. This DVD instead contains the 2007 Zürich revival built around Cecilia Bartoli. It is conducted by William Christie (who directed the production's first run in 1996), but with little of his usual warmth and stylish sensibilities evident in this hard-driven, erratic and clumsy interpretation.

'Bartoli's masquerading as something approximately resembling her character is dramatically implausible'

Much of this is recklessly fast (as if to mask the deficiencies of some of the singing), peculiarly lacklustre or frustratingly interventionist (and sometimes all three things at once). Decca boldly proclaims on a cover sticker that this is Bartoli's first Handel role on DVD, but this is nothing to get excited about. Her masquerading as something approximately resembling her character is dramatically implausible most of the time (a vicious "No, no, I'll take no less" is an honourable exception), her recitatives are irritatingly mannered (the simple line "I seek to shun society" is enunciated with more misplaced exaggerations, and acted with less conviction, than I would have believed possible), and her unsteady machine-gun pinching of coloratura passages is difficult to enjoy (why can't she keep her vowels in order during "Endless pleasure"?). Most of the rest of the cast is even worse. Charles Workman's strident Jupiter comes off slightly better, and his *pianissimo* singing in the *da capo* of "Where'er you walk" is impressive (though Christie takes it far too slowly). Decca would have done better to licence the 1999 BBC broadcast and issue that on DVD rather than unleash the manifold horrors of this woeful performance upon sensitive Handelians. Avoid at all costs unless you're a die-hard Bartoli worshipper.

David Vickers

Haydn

Die Jahreszeiten, HobXXI/3
Miriam Meyer *sop* James Taylor *ten* Ralf Lukas *bass*
Chorgemeinschaft Neubuere;
Klang Verwaltung Orchestra, Munich /
Enoch zu Guttenberg
Farao Classics © DVD B108055
(167' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM Stereo and 5.0 • 0)

An engaging and onomatopoeic rendering of Haydn's seasonal creation

This performance comes from the Markgräflisches Opernhaus in Bayreuth, the rococo theatre where Wagner originally thought he might stage *The Ring*. Made for television in 2004, it now appears on DVD for the first time.



Perhaps influenced by the composer's own disparaging remarks, critics tend to blame *The Seasons* for not being *The Creation*. It's true that Haydn's second venture into Handelian oratorio has some weak passages, but they are easily overlooked in a performance as lively as this. Baron van Swieten, in his adaptation of James Thomson's poem, provided Haydn – albeit to the latter's irritation – with plenty of opportunities for the pictorialism that is such a delight in *The Creation*. There are onomatopoeic representations of quail, cricket and frog, not to mention a crowing cockerel. "Summer" includes sunrise and a thunderstorm; as for the chromatic introduction to "Winter", it's surely as fine as the depiction of Chaos in the earlier work.

What struck me was the way in which Haydn evokes the shade of Mozart. "Uns speiset Überfluss" and "Quam olim Abraham" in the Requiem are perhaps no more than 18th-century common coin; but the slow movement of Mozart's 40th Symphony can be heard in "Erblick hier, betörter Mensch", and the last section of the duet for Hanne and Lukas in "Autumn" recalls Konstanze and Belmonte in *Die Entführung*. Each season includes at least one fugue. Enoch zu Guttenberg claims that Haydn expressed his distaste for having to set a

'Guttenberg and his Bavarian forces give an excellent account of this underrated piece'

chorus in praise of industry (in the sense of hard work) by writing a "merciless parody" of a Baroque fugue: unlikely, if only because the fugal last chorus makes use of the same flattened seventh, and it's addressed to God.

Guttenberg makes this point in one of four optional talks, in which he says much of interest. He and his Bavarian forces give an excellent account of this underrated piece. Well balanced soloists and orchestra (modern instruments, with natural horns added in the hunting chorus, and a wonderful alphorn in "Der munt're Hirt"), but the choir could be more forward. The conductor's bizarre liking for quiet endings to loud movements was not enough to spoil my enjoyment of this splendid recording.

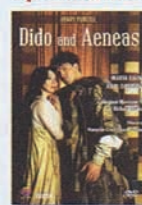
Richard Lawrence

Purcell

Dido and Aeneas

Maria Ewing *sop* Dido
Karl Daymond *bar* Aeneas
Rebecca Evans *sop* Belinda
Sally Burgess *mez* Sorceress
Patrizia Rozario *sop* Second Woman
James McDougall *ten* Aeneas's Lieutenant
James Bowman *countertenor* Voice of Mercury

Collegium Musicum 90 / Richard Hickox
Video director Peter Maniura
Warner Music Vision/NVC Arts
© DVD 5144 28822-2
(56' • NTSC • 4:3 • PCM stereo • 2-5)
Recorded at Hampton Court House in 1995
A welcome release on DVD of this opulent, if uneven, production



Filmed on location in a few less obvious corners of Hampton Court, this BBC production was broadcast in the previous Purcell anniversary year (1995) and now makes a return on DVD.

Interiors flicker by torchlight and the outdoor scenes are a highly attractive mixture of Poussin and period drama, with sumptuous costumes and thoughtfully designed set pieces. It is a rich feast that makes fulsome use of the location, and the director Peter Maniura complements Purcell's music with consistently sensitive imagery. There is enough in the playing, chorus and secondary roles to

'This performance is a timely reminder that the late Richard Hickox was a fine Purcellian'

enjoy, and this performance is a timely reminder that the late Richard Hickox was a fine Purcellian. Collegium Musicum 90's playing is superb, and the chorus and its echoes are excellent during "In our deep vaulted cell".

Not so happily, Hickox adopted slowish tempi for recitatives in all of the scenes involving Dido, which presages the mood of her final lament too early. Maria Ewing looks every inch the glamorous diva in her Baroque gown but she is a rather dull Dido early on, and it is unfortunate that her lip-synching is frequently unconvincing. It is a pity that the producers of this beautiful film did not record the voices live. Most regrettable is the uneven casting: Karl Daymond looks the part of the wandering Trojan Aeneas, but his quivering baritone lags behind the beat, and Ewing over-eggs Dido's music with swoops, swells, excessive vibrato and *rubato* that ill befits the Collegium Musicum 90's impeccable period-style textures.

"When I am laid in earth" is undone by her pushing out individual notes and emotive exaggeration rather than conveying a full melodic arch (although her visual performance is moving). On the other hand, Rebecca Evans's silvery Belinda is finely sung, and Sally Burgess's machinating Sorceress is a convincingly devious villainess (but is not hammed up for comic effect, despite having two ideally mean witch accomplices). We hear James Bowman as the Spirit, but the blue-skinned Restoration Tarzan we see is clearly a stunt double. All in all, a mixed bag musically, but an enjoyable interpretation to watch. David Vickers

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of reissues and archive recordings

Master fiddlers in contrast

The Yehudi Menuhin debate: early-mid or mid-late? A fabulous Szymon Goldberg collection

Few musicians of the recent past have divided opinion more frequently or more passionately than Yehudi Menuhin. Not that there are many who would question Menuhin's deep-rooted musicianship, nor indeed his profoundly compassionate humanism, but the real issue is, at least in the present context: which phase of Menuhin's career is the one to go for on records, "early-mid" or "mid-late"? According to that provocative but informed string-records guru Tully Potter, writing in the context of his absorbing booklet essay for EMI's 50-CD "Yehudi Menuhin: The Great EMI Recordings", there are "...lazy-eared, blasé critics who will tell you that Menuhin was a better violinist in the 1930s than in the 1950s and 1960s". Well, sorry Tully, on the evidence presented here, I rather suspect that he was. "A better violinist", mind, and not necessarily a "better musician", as the Bach and Mozart concertos amply prove. Oft-reissued, the Bach concertos with the Bath Festival Orchestra are subtler than their more flamboyant Thirties predecessors but I wouldn't necessarily say that they are better played. The same applies to the solo Sonatas and Partitas, though Menuhin's two subsequent sets are not included in the present collection. As to the 1932 account of Elgar's Concerto, the frisson between the teenage Menuhin and the septuagenarian Elgar, where Menuhin's emotional response never ages and the composer's conducting rages against the dying light, is a miracle to behold.

These are iconic records but 50 CDs cover a lot of ground. Of the "middle-period" recordings, I would cite the Bach and Handel items (though why only three *Brandenburg* Concertos?), the Beethoven violin sonatas with Louis Kentner, the Bloch Concerto under Kletzki, *Harold in Italy* under Sir Colin Davis (where Menuhin plays viola) and the Grieg sonatas with Robert Levin as being exceptional. Paganini's First Concerto was rather less agile in 1955 than it had been in 1934, though it's still pretty good and the comparison is in a sense unfair because the earlier recording is, like the Elgar, truly a miraculous one-off. It was interesting to return to the 1969 Walton Concerto (under Walton himself), a poignant and expressively potent reading but too effortful by half. And that I suppose is the gist of the problem. Menuhin in youth and relative youth was in full command of a technique that obliged the emotional force of his interpretations with full expression. The two combined – technique and unchecked passion – made for some fabulous records, virtually all of which are included here. Beyond that phase one too often senses that Menuhin was swimming against the current, trying too hard: certain shifts sound arthritic and the tone tends to fray at the edges. The sound is simply too overwrought.

Still, for all that, there are treasurable moments aplenty, even from Menuhin's late phase. And there's the repertoire, not to mention the superb musical collaborators – Schubert trios with Maurice Gendron and Hepzibah Menuhin, Brahms's sextets with Aronowitz and Gendron, concertos by, among others, Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Mendelssohn, Nielsen, Sibelius and Vieuxtemps (often in duplicate versions) under the likes of Furtwängler, Enescu, Kempe, Dorati, Boult and Boulez; also numerous sonatas, short "genre" pieces and so on. I would confidently recommend investment, especially at such a modest



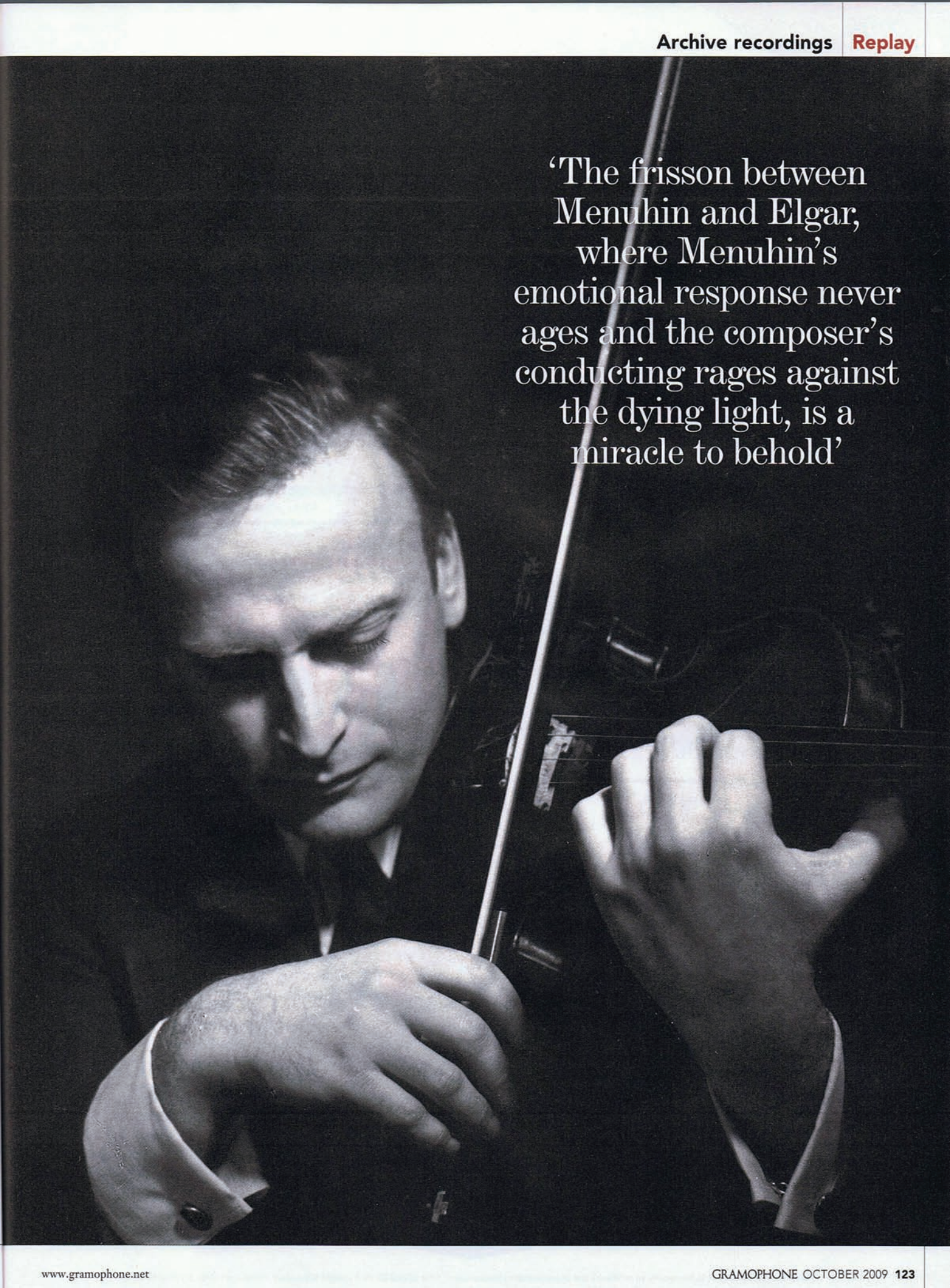
price-point where the few genuine duds can be seen as freebie curios.

Tully Potter also annotates Music & Arts' well-transferred eight-CD "Szymon Goldberg, Vol 1: The Non-commercial Recordings", a superb essay in honour of a remarkable player. In Bach, given a choice between Menuhin with the Bath Festival Orchestra in 1958 and Goldberg with the

Netherlands Chamber Orchestra in 1960 (Aldeburgh), I'd opt for Goldberg's subtler inflections and restrained expressiveness every time. His grasp of the E major Concerto's first movement, where it should peak or relax, is unrivalled and among vintage fiddlers only Huberman makes such an inspirational statement of the *Adagio*. How valuable too to have a worthy sound document of Schnabel-pupil Marcia Curcio's elegant piano-playing (in the Fifth *Brandenburg* Concerto), as well as a Brahms Double Concerto with Zara Nelsova, her only known recording of the work. Goldberg's Beethoven Concerto under Dimitri Mitropoulos, which takes manuscript sources as a starting-point, is both brilliant and interpretatively imaginative (the cadenza sounds like an extension of Joachim's) and Mendelssohn's Concerto is heard in a truly riveting performance from the 1957 Edinburgh Festival, the closing pages of the first movement – and virtually the whole of the finale – much aided by incisive, highly charged support from the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Eduard van Beinum. There's a teasingly sensuous (and tonally alluring) Debussy Sonata with Arthur Balsam and an intensely spiritual 1952 reading of the Berg Concerto where William Steinberg conducts the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Other highlights include Mozart's Fourth Concerto, sprightly and elegantly phrased, a darkly drawn account of Schumann's A minor Sonata (Balsam), recordings of Haydn and Schubert with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra and various chamber works recorded at Casals's Prades Festival. Music by Bartók (Solo Sonata), Stravinsky, Webern and Schoenberg, all recorded at the Aspen Festival in the mid- to late 1960s, attests to an impressive grasp of what at the time was ranked as "difficult" music, though to be fair Goldberg's absolute prime was probably from the 1930s through to the early 1960s. That said, even at his least secure the older Goldberg sounds fully the master of his instrument. The booklet features a full discography of Goldberg's non-commercial recordings which includes numerous items that one hopes will surface before long and I'm told that Vol 2 will be devoted to Goldberg's commercially released 78s. Personally speaking, I can't wait. A fabulous collection.

The Recordings

- **Various Cpsrs** The Great EMI Recordings Menuhin
EMI © (50 discs) 264131-2
- **Various Cpsrs** Non-commercial Recordings Goldberg
Music & Arts © ® CD1223



'The frisson between Menuhin and Elgar, where Menuhin's emotional response never ages and the composer's conducting rages against the dying light, is a miracle to behold'

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* Titles and prices subject to availability while stocks last at participating stores/online. CDs priced £5.99 if bought separately. Promotion ends 8th August 2009.

VOLKMAR ANDREAЕ'S BRUCKNER

All nine symphonies from a true disciple of the composer

For years I've been waiting for Philips to reissue recordings of Bruckner's first three symphonies as recorded by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra under the baton of the Swiss conductor-composer Volkmar Andreae, performances notable for their energy, transparency and natural sense of flow and tempo. Happily my patience has been handsomely rewarded by Music & Arts with a set of the complete 1953 cycle which includes two of the recordings issued by Philips (the First and the Second; the Philips Third was from two years later) and a version of the Fourth previously issued on CD by Orfeo. Again M&A has commissioned a superb booklet-note, this time from the Bruckner recordings expert Mark W Kluge.

Andreae's career suddenly changed direction when he heard Strauss conduct Bruckner's Third Symphony during the first decade of the 20th century. He himself then went on to conduct the Swiss premieres of both the Fourth and Ninth Symphonies. "I have dedicated my life to Anton Bruckner" is quite a claim and yet hearing these insightful and always elastic interpretations one can happily concur with the quoted view



its audience". Bruckner was a constant presence during Andreae's 43-year tenure as chief conductor of the Zürich Tonhalle Orchestra, also on his visits to Vienna, principally to conduct the Symphony Orchestra but also on occasion the Philharmonic. The booklet offers chapter and

verse both on which Andreae recordings survive (whether issued or as yet unreleased), including more Bruckner, and on the various textual editions favoured for individual performances.

'A major discovery for all discerning Brucknerians, and probably the earliest single-conductor complete cycle'

verse both on which Andreae recordings survive (whether issued or as yet unreleased), including more Bruckner, and on the various textual editions favoured for individual performances.

As to what we hear, I would point out the sheer joy at the climax of the Eighth's *Adagio* and the finale's coda, the superb judgement of tempi in the first movement of the Sixth, the sprightliness and grandeur of the Fifth's finale and the lyrical axis of the Seventh. Only the Ninth seems to me occasionally rushed but even there the list of virtues by far outweighs any passing quirks, and there's a superb fill-up in the *Te Deum* with as good a line-up of singers as was on offer at the time – Loose, Rössel-Majdan, Dermota and Frick. The orchestra plays well, the approach always totally committed if at times a little thin in the violins department, and the transfers are wholly excellent. A major discovery for all discerning Brucknerians, and probably the earliest "single-conductor" complete numbered Bruckner symphony cycle that we now have.

The Recordings

- **Bruckner** Cpte Syms **Andreae**
Music & Arts M ② CD1227

ANSERMET AS CLASSICIST

The Swiss master demonstrates the Eloquence of being Ernest

Another Swiss master is the subject of an extended reissue programme from Australian Eloquence, thanks to the initiative of series manager Cyrus Meher-Homji. Long-term *Gramophone* regulars will be familiar with Ernest Ansermet's Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky ballets, but what about his Haydn and Mozart? **Haydn**, maybe, at least the six "Paris" Symphonies which some years



ago Decca reissued locally and which Universal Music Australia Pty Ltd have now added to their own Ansermet catalogue, plain-speaking accounts that let the jokes tell themselves (ie the clucking hen that sits at the second subject of No 83's first movement) while Ansermet's authoritative guidance always shines through. Two very different trumpeters feature on a CD that couples Haydn's Trumpet Concerto (a very brazen-sounding Paolo Longinotti) and Hummel's E flat Concerto (a softer-toned



of ideas including a "surprise" that's far more striking than the one in the symphony that's so-named!

Cuvit turns up again (on less good form) in an unusual double-pack playing Leopold Mozart's Trumpet Concerto in B flat but the real surprise on the same (second) CD is a measured but thoughtfully phrased mid-Fifties reading of Mozart's Serenade in B flat for 13 wind instruments, the *Gran partita*, K361. Initial misgivings about the Suisse Romande's potentially fallible woodwinds section (oboes in particular) proved justified only occasionally but as a whole the performance is well worth hearing. Flautist André Pepin is delicately expressive in the Second Flute Concerto and there are two rarities from the late 1940s, a

spirited and sensitive *Prague* Symphony that had you played it to me "blind" would have suggested Henry Wood at his best, and a brightly lit *Exsultate, jubilate* with



Janine Micheau as soloist. What a treasure trove, and as I'm writing this a little birdie tells me that Ansermet's Beethoven symphony cycle is in preparation – and it includes one of the finest orchestral *Grosse fuges* ever recorded. More about that anon, hopefully. In the meantime, keep 'em comin', Cyrus! ②

The Recordings

- **Haydn** Paris Syms **Ansermet**
Decca Eloquence M ② 480 1942
- **Haydn. Hummel** Tpt Concs **Ansermet**
Decca Eloquence M 480 0378
- **Mozart** Fl Conc No 2. Sym No 38 **Ansermet**
Decca Eloquence M ② 480 0379

Books

Roy Howat on French piano music • Scared of Stockhausen? • Music in literature

The Art of French Piano Music

Debussy, Ravel, Fauré and Chabrier

By Roy Howat

Yale University Press, HB, 400pp, £30/\$45
ISBN 0-300-14547-0



This magnum opus is a tribute to Roy Howat's endless study of, and affection for, the finest French piano music. Here, in all their subtle glory, are the works not only of Debussy and Ravel but of Chabrier and Fauré, sifted

and analysed with an unending sense of wit and intricacy. Their origins, too, are centre stage in Howat's argument when he points to the vast quantity of music stored in great composers' minds, echoing and resonating consciously or subconsciously throughout their lives. For him Debussy's love of Chopin finds a constant remembrance not so much of things past but of an ever-present force. Thus the demonic leaps of the Etude "pour les accords" recalls the no less devilish bumps of the *Scherzo* from Chopin's Second Sonata. Again, Ravel's "Scarbo" recalls the repeated-note motif from that same *Scherzo* while "Ondine" is similarly influenced by Chopin's A flat Etude, Op 25, in its figuration

'Howat's ingenuity is never less than stimulating and his book includes a wealth of valuable quotes'

and shimmering close. No less remarkably, Debussy's Etude "pour les sixtes" finds its base in Schumann's *Humoreske* (the *einfach und zart* section) while Fauré's fifth Nocturne recalls the opening of Liszt's Third *Liebestraum*. Yet such fascinating parallels are surely important because of their differences rather than similarities of ideas drawn from a vast well of subliminal knowledge that are both potently and delicately transformed by the composer's individual voice and style. As Margaret Schlegel, the ever-pragmatic heroine of EM Forster's novel *Howard's End* puts it, "if Debussy is like Monet, and Monet is like Debussy then, in my opinion, neither gentleman is worth his salt".

But Howat's ingenuity is never less than stimulating and his book includes a wealth of valuable quotations. His own description of his beloved composers as "velvet revolutionaries" is

brilliantly apt and his reminder that irony is so often at the heart of a French composer's outlook is both droll and revealing. Poulenc, for example, was in the habit of begging pianists with an addiction to dryness to "put more butter in the sauce"; that as quadrupeds they should pedal more freely. Fauré spoke of the excessive respect shown to masterpieces, rendering them dull and lifeless, while his mentor Saint-Saëns, disconcerted by Paderewski's way of playing one hand after the other asked a conductor, "which of his hands have you decided to follow?"

At the same time there is always a sense of how such amusing, if sometimes vituperative, comments were a reaction of excess and the sort of affectation that distorts the truth of great music. When they loved, they loved unapologetically. Writing on Couperin, Debussy said, "nothing can make us forget that slyly voluptuous perfume, the unavowed fine perversity that innocently hovers around 'Les barricades mystérieuses'." Such perception mirrors a finesse, elegance and sophistication that is at the very centre of France's inimitable musical art.

Roy Howat's book is an Aladdin's cave of scholarly perception, provocative, challenging and, above all, guided by lifelong devotion.

Bryce Morrison

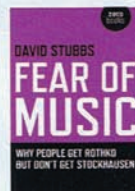
Fear of Music

Why People Get Rothko But Don't Get Stockhausen

By David Stubbs

Zero Books, PB, 135pp, £10

ISBN 1-84694-179-5



Any new music polemic that starts by quoting Tony Hancock is OK with me. As music journalist David Stubbs explains, the "germ of the notion" for his book came from a scene in Hancock's 1960 film *The Rebel*

as the Bard of Railway Cuttings stumbles across an abstract expressionist painting and snorts "Who's gone raving mad here, then?" Oh, how the chattering classes sniggered at Hancock's philistinism – but Stubbs's book is predicated on the certain assumption that had the joke been at the expense of, say, a piece of 12-tone or aleatoric music, those same people would have nodded in wholehearted agreement.

There is surprisingly little about Rothko and Stockhausen themselves in Stubbs's svelte text. They are totems who symbolise the thrust of his argument – but substituting Kandinsky and Schoenberg, or Damien Hirst and Michael

Claude Debussy:
worth his salt?



Finnissy, inside that same equation would serve Stubbs equally well: "Why has avant-garde music failed to attain the audience, the cachet, the legitimacy of its visual equivalent?" he asks.

It's to his credit that Stubbs doesn't contrive easily digestible answers. After all, these are complex issues that touch at the marrow of why new music might be in crisis. Visits to Tate Modern are bittersweet occasions as one wonders why an audience open to *recherché* visual concepts might still balk at Tippett, and how depressing to read in the *Daily Telegraph* a deluded Simon Heffer – who, apparently, still struggles with Peter Maxwell Davies – insisting that he has seen the future and therein is early-20th-century English pastoralism. No doubt, whenever sincere and visionary new music clashes with the mainstream it emerges bruised, battered, ridiculed.

Stubbs probably underestimates the insular protectionism of institutionalised "New Music" in the UK, a scene that remains transfixed – and is ultimately limited – by an obsession with a narrow field of "great men" from history. But as he traces a narrative from the birth pangs of serialism and early electronica outwards, it is inspiring to read an account that gives *musique concrète* pioneers Pierre Schaffer and Pierre Henry proper due; that recognises improvising

'These are complex issues that touch at the marrow of why new music might be in crisis'

guitarist Derek Bailey and saxophonist Ornette Coleman as two of the most advanced musicians of the last 100 years; that calmly analyses why avant-rock groups like Can, This Heat and Faust created/are creating music with parallel concerns to "outsider" composers such as Alvin Lucier, Christian Marclay and Luc Ferrari. Is one problem, perhaps, that what trades as "new music" at concerts and festivals is usually by white middle-class academics?

That hypothesis, while good for music, has its practical problems. Are audiences who find even mainstream new music tough now expected to grapple with tricky concepts of improvised music, sound art and grand composerly visions? I guess that depends on how far you're up for having music confront your certainties, telling you things you didn't already know. But Stubbs's counterpoint between art and music provides a safety net for the nervy. As he explains the aesthetic connections between Kandinsky's concepts of colour and Schoenberg's serialism, between Rothko and Morton Feldman, and reveals an alternative history of new music that came out of art colleges and other unlikely places, it becomes obvious – the only thing you have to fear is fear itself.

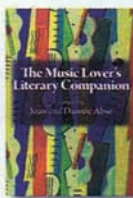
Philip Clark



Katherine Mansfield:
cold, sharp despair

The Music Lover's Literary Companion

Compiled by Joan and Dannie Abse
JR Books, PB, 330pp, £15
ISBN 1-906779-12-2



So, what have I garnered? Two strangely vivid prose-pieces for a start, which with their Russian settings are with me to stay. One is a tense little tale of soldiers on duty in a snowbound Russian forest ("Push your balaclava back off your ears – that's an order"). The silence is terrible, the sound of a snapping branch worse. Then one, almost mad, sings a Christmas carol: they're Germans, one suddenly realises. As is the way with good anthologies, one makes a note of the author's unfamiliar name and the title of his book: Wolfgang Borchat, *The Man Outside*.

The other piece, by Turgenev, comes from a collection called *A Sportsman's Sketches*. This episode is "The Singers", one of them a veritable village Smirnov or Kozlovsky: "he played with his voice like a woodlark, twisting and turning it in incessant roulades and trills up and down the scale." The song of the other began softly and told of "breadth and space as though the familiar steppes were unfolding before our eyes". Still more vivid than the songs and singers are the audience and the place, the local inn with its presiding authority, the Wild Master, with his "low forehead, narrow Tartar eyes...an old black silk handkerchief twisted round his immense neck". There are poems,

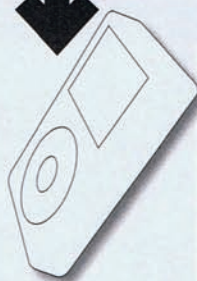
also to be stored afresh, though proportionately perhaps not all that many of them. Valerie Gillies's *Piano Tuner* and Cecil Day Lewis's *Cornet Player* are among them, and Hardy's *Lines* not very obviously related to Mozart's Symphony in E flat. Several others, no doubt harvested already, are still well met: Shakespeare's lines about the bounders who have no music in their souls, DH Lawrence ("with hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide") recalling "the old Sunday evenings at home", and tributes to Blessed Cecilia by Dryden, Pope and Auden.

The editorial hands have been active without seeming to be so. No interpolations, explanations or excuses, no pestering of the texts with little numbers distracting the eye to look at footnotes: just a convenient division into sections ("Composers", "Musicians", "Opera", "Music out of doors" and so forth). Under "Music Lessons" we have Clarence Day's hilarious account of early efforts to play the violin, and there is a bright-eyed short story by Katherine Mansfield called *The Singing Lesson* ("With despair – cold, sharp despair – buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall"). And speaking of short-stories, there's a gruesome domestic scherzo by Roald Dahl about a cat who liked Liszt...

All good stuff for the bedside table or the comfortably seated train journey. As one who drops off at the mere sight of a pillow and at the moment the wheels begin to roll, I can also vouch for its companionable nature in living room and kitchen, from breakfast time to supper. John Steane

Tune surfing

James Jolly offers his pick of the best websites for the classical music enthusiast, embracing company sites, download stores and digital concert halls



There was a report a couple of days ago about a pensioner confined to his bedroom because the local council hadn't sorted him out a stair lift – a deplorable situation but it got me thinking about what a music-lover could get at if the only link to the outside world was a computer. Life wouldn't have to look – or perhaps that should be sound – too bleak. So here's a list of my top dozen web destinations for the classical music fan.

There's much talk about "push" and "pull" in the cyber world – stuff you choose to receive (pull) and stuff that is directed at you (push). In the early years of the net everything seemed to be about pull – drawing information from the web, but perhaps the human desire for guidance and help has overcome our hunter-gatherer instincts and we like to be steered towards (for the purposes of this piece) the music. Radio has always been a "push" medium – and the current rude health of radio (at least in the UK) may hint at the way we like to consume our culture.

There are hundreds of radio-station websites catering to every possible musical taste. With the Proms still in full flood, and its world-beating feast of music, the BBC's website has to step immediately into the Dozen, probably narrowed down to the Radio 3 site and its access to the iPlayer – essential for catching up with the network's output from the previous week but also good for checking out the television offerings on BBCs 2 and 4 (I've been back twice for the quite staggering MGM movies celebration from John Wilson and his Orchestra).

If you like the jukebox approach of many web offerings then check out AOL's radio, powered by CBS Radio, in the States. For free, though with the occasional break for an advert between pieces, you've the choice of, among others, Baroque, classical crossover, modern classical, opera, Renaissance, Romantic Classical, vocal arts as well as a link to New York's WQXR (access seems to be limited to the USA, UK and Germany for some reason).

Record companies' own sites vary enormously, guided presumably by what they deem to be their prime purpose: as a catalogue, as an extended source of information or as a combination of those, with the added opportunity for purchase. Chandos, for example, has its classicalshop.net and Naxos



its classiconline.com (and it's also worth drawing attention to Naxos's catalogue site and its superb Naxos Music library). But the URL I'm going to nominate first as a fine example of a record company site, doing it very well, is Deutsche Grammophon's DG Web Shop, a mine of information, though it's a bit sketchy on the provenance of its historic releases (none of the Original Masters series I looked at, for example, has recording dates), a shame because with DG's customary attention to detail as demonstrated throughout the LP era, this information must exist. But for a site that does everything from announcing new signings, showing off new releases and allowing visitors to purchase, it certainly offers a fine service.

My second record company website – one that doesn't allow direct purchase (indeed the company has taken a slightly Luddite stance when it comes to matters digital) – is Hyperion's. This is a beautifully elegant site, simple and stylish, that gives you just the right information at each stage of your journey through it. Would that every record company site were as cleanly conceived and executed. For the retailer (or the collector-completist) there's even a numerical listing that says whether a CD is generally available, available as a special order, deleted or reissued under another

Enjoy a virtual recital by Yuja Wang from your desktop, thanks to Medici's online concert relays

number. If you register you can even read the sleeve-notes to pretty well any disc (something that's quite useful if you've acquired the music from, say, iTunes and want to read the notes).

Download sites are also remarkably hit and miss – what you miss on the metadata front (basically the individual track level data) you might gain on functionality. What you gain on quantity you might lose on ease of downloading. I tend to get most of my music from eMusic, iTunes, The Classical Shop, Classics Online and Pristine Classical. Each has its strengths and of course a lot depends on how you intend to listen, but I think if forced to nominate just one it would probably be iTunes (I know the bit-rate isn't particularly high, and the metadata is sketchy, but as a seamless experience it takes a lot of beating). As soon as it makes its offerings truly international, I would be plumping for Classical Archives – a very impressive site for US-based music-lovers only at present (though there are ways for UK customers to get around that). So, if iTunes serves for major-company music (plus a pretty impressive amount of independent-label music) then the indie sector is well looked after by Classics Online (320 kbps across a vast catalogue) and The Classical Shop (a huge number of FLAC albums, also with a vast choice). I'm going to add them both to my list.

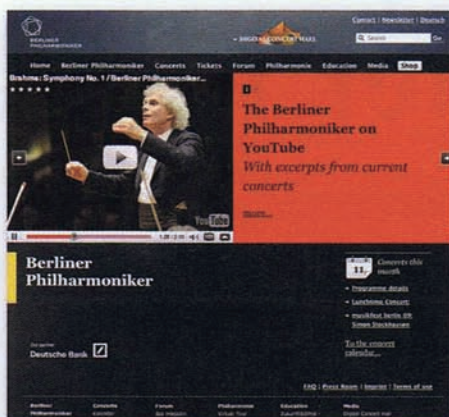
If downloading isn't your thing and you purchase your music on CD – and you'll be in good company – then the chances are that your



LARRY FORD

preferred retailer will be Amazon. There's little to touch them for range, global reach, customer service and, generally, ease of use. They have to go on the list. But the independent sector supports some impressive sites, and one that strikes me as a model in recreating the good "old-fashioned" style of a shop staffed by people who know what they're talking about and clearly listen to the music themselves, is Presto Classical. It's a mine of information: up-to-date, enthusiastic and revealing a genuine love of records on every page. The company's customer service is much admired.

I'll skirt round regular concert-hall sites simply because they're not much use if you don't live in the vicinity, and I'll avoid blogs too as they depend so much on personal taste – I leave you to follow your own taste, though I would heartily commend Alex Ross's *The Rest is Noise*, a site I've mentioned before in this column. I will, however, pick a couple of sites that take you beyond the searching of concerts and the booking of tickets into the concert hall itself. The most impressive by far is the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, a high-definition arena that allows you to watch the concerts in the Philharmonie not only live but also archived. The picture and sound quality are astoundingly crisp and clear and, with an orchestra of this quality, you can be guaranteed music-making of a very high order. With the new season just starting it's well worth checking out, and if you can link your PC/Mac to your TV you are assured a pretty terrific experience.



Place No 11 goes to Medici, forging ahead with concert relays that convey the thrill of being there. A vast number of events from Switzerland's Verbier Festival are available online (as I write, Yuja Wang is playing Scarlatti on my desktop) – sound and picture are very good. I also like the style of the site – it's modern, sleek and really makes one want to explore. There are films to download and much to sample, but enter the Video on Demand section and the riches are astounding.

To end I'm going to put in a word for *Gramophone's* own archive site which contains pretty well every page of every issue of the magazine since it started in April 1923 – that's over 115,000 pages, making it one of the largest resources on classical music on the web. You can find every review, interview or feature we've ever published. It's all free – and about to get bigger!



Costuming *Così* requires attention to detail

Blogwatch

<http://operanorth.wordpress.com>

STEPHEN RODWELL, Opera North's head of costume, gives his insight into clothing *Così*

Così fan tutte opens the Opera North autumn season and so it is the first show to fit. In the last two days we have fitted the entire cast, which is made up of six key characters. Whilst this is a revival and the opera has been performed some years ago, we are making the costumes new for all the singers as there is such disparity in size between the old cast and the new one. Attention to detail on these costumes is paramount. It's a small piece and so the audience's total focus is on those six people; their hair, what shoes they have on, the colour and design of an outfit...it's all also tied in to reflect the psychology of the drama. A key theme is disguise: the characters begin quite straight-laced and formal, their costumes are rigid (18th-century boned bodices for the girls), then as the story evolves, so do their personalities and clothes. They end more relaxed, more colourful and essentially different people.

The fitting is a key stage in the preparation of the singer – we talk about the impact of their costume, how that will make their character appear and feel; it helps the singer to visualise their role and persona for the first time ahead of full rehearsals. I then go through the same discussion process with the director. It's an ongoing process – right through to the first night and beyond.

Così is quite full-on costume-wise, the four lead male and female singers have two costumes each, the manipulative Despina has three. The designer specified the shade of grey silk he wanted for the women, in order to be enhanced by the stage setting and lighting, and for three costumes alone we have used over 200ft of material, which sounds immense – the dresses are beautiful.

We are making the costumes new as there is such a disparity of size between the old cast and the new

A DOZEN ESSENTIAL SITES FOR THE CLASSICAL MUSIC FAN

- **AOL Radio** <http://music.aol.com>
A wide selection of streamed music across numerous classical genres
- **BBC** www.bbc.co.uk
A wealth of music, streamed and archived, as well as access to the iPlayer
- **DG Web Shop** www.dgwebshop.com
The Yellow Label's catalogue-cum-digital-and-CD store
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Alexander Romanovsky

pianist

“Romanovsky is a pianist of great talent. One can expect to hear quite a lot about his artistry.”

— Carlo Maria Giulini

Alexander Romanovsky is heir to the great Russian tradition, with a career already distinguished by accomplishments that elude all but the select few. A prodigious pianist in every sense of the word, Romanovsky toured as soloist with the Moscow Virtuosi under the direction of Vladimir Spivakov at the age of 11 and received an Honorary Degree from the Royal Philharmonic Academy of Bologna at the remarkable age of 15, an honor granted to only two musicians before him: Mozart and Rossini. Two years later, Romanovsky confirmed his place among the leading pianists of his time by capturing the coveted grand prize at the celebrated Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition.

Romanovsky is a Decca recording artist. His highly anticipated second CD, featuring Rachmaninov, *Études-Tableaux*, Opus 39, and *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*, Opus 42, was released in May 2009. A month later, Romanovsky made his North American debut at the famed Newport Music Festival, to universal acclaim. This fall, in addition to playing numerous performances across the United States and in Europe, Romanovsky will debut at both Wigmore Hall and the Barbican Centre.



Musical journeys

Exploring the world's music

MANCHESTER

Bridgewater Hall, October 9

Douglas Boyd conducts the Manchester Camerata in Alwyn's *Autumn Legend*, Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 with soloist Jonathan Biss, and Beethoven's Symphony No 8. Details: +44 (0)161 907 9000 / www.manchestercamerata.co.uk
For more listings, see page 135

A vision for Quebec

Charlotte Smith visits Lanaudière and witnesses a festival committed to continuing one man's dream for classical music



The amphitheatre at Lanaudière and (inset) Father Fernand Lindsay

JOLIETTE

Making the approach through the shady, tree-lined avenue to Lanaudière's elegant amphitheatre, the festival's tip-top credentials are strikingly clear. Quebec's premiere musical event is as slick and streamlined an operation as many an established and well patronised festival in the US or Europe. So much so that its humble origins are difficult to fathom. Yet the Festival de Lanaudière, now in its 32nd year, was the inspiration of a single man – Father Fernand Lindsay.

The ordained priest, musician and educator attended a series of summer concerts at festivals in Salzburg, Munich, Aix-en-Provence and Bayreuth while studying philosophy in Paris in 1963. What he brought back to his hometown of Joliette was more than an understanding of Plato, Aristotle and Kant. Already heavily involved in community music-making having founded a combined festival and competition in the small Canadian town, Father Lindsay's new vision was to share his musical passion with a wider audience. And just as arts enthusiasts were keen to make the trip to relatively small, culturally modest European cities during the summer festival months, so too he reasoned would they travel to Joliette if the tempting formula of interesting artists and winning programmes could be achieved.

Sadly Father Lindsay died in March this year at the age of 80. Still, his artistic influence is keenly felt. Often described as a grandfather-like figure to music and musicians, he was actively involved as the festival's artistic director until his death. It is perhaps his lingering generosity of spirit that has ensured Lanaudière remains at heart a warm and personal experience. Clearly times have changed since the first event in 1978 presented eight concerts featuring local artists. Today the festival's dedicated outdoor amphitheatre, with its impressive natural amplification, seats 2000, and its expansive lawn can cater for a further 8000. Over the years the celebration has played host to such luminaries as Mstislav Rostropovich, Itzhak Perlman and Cecilia Bartoli. With 25 concerts running from July to August it is now Canada's largest festival of classical music. Yet despite its increase in size and profile, the festival, like its neighbouring city of Montreal, tempers the modern sheen with old-world class.

For the past few years Lanaudière's concert planning has been overseen by programming director Alex Benjamin and this year's offering adhered again to an engaging mixture of large-scale orchestral and more intimate chamber performances. Among the visiting artists were Yannick

Nézet-Séguin, who conducted Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Gershwin's Concerto in F with piano soloist Alain Lefèvre; cellist Matthew Barley performing Tan Dun's *The Map*; harpist Catrin Finch performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in transcription; and pianist Jonathan Biss in recital.

The success of Benjamin's programming was evident at the two concerts I attended

– Paul Lewis and his Ensemble Filarmonia performing Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos 12 and 27 with seemingly superhuman finesse, and Kent Nagano conducting a notable Montreal Symphony

in Brahms's *German Requiem* with solo vocalists Sophie Karthäuser and Nathan Gunn. Despite the twin threats of rain and recession, audience attendance was high: a refreshingly egalitarian mix of young and mature concertgoers, from the well-heeled indulging in a more extravagant evening to those happy to opt for the relaxed informality of shorts or jeans.

Clearly a modern success story and testament to the enduring appeal of classical music when presented with imagination, the festival, one might assume, has reached its full potential. But Benjamin believes more can be achieved, especially by contracting larger visiting orchestras. "Of course we will never reach the scale of the Proms, but I am ready to embrace the challenge of bringing leading American and European orchestras to Lanaudière," he says. With a badge bearing the image of Father Lindsay pinned to his jacket, one does not doubt his conviction. "What Father Lindsay always wanted for Lanaudière was a desire to share the gift of music in the way one happily shares one's most treasured possessions." On the evidence of this year's success, and the determination and love with which Lindsay is remembered, his vision will surely live on.





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Musical journeys

Letter from Santa Fe

A new opera from Terry Teachout engages both the pulse and the brain, finds Chloe Veltman

SANTA FE

While developing a new opera for this year's Santa Fe Opera Festival, librettist (and *Wall Street Journal* drama critic) Terry Teachout came across a comment of George Bernard Shaw's regarding *Il trovatore* which summed up what he and composer Paul Moravec hoped to achieve with their own project: "It is swift in action, and perfectly homogenous in atmosphere and feeling. It is absolutely void of intellectual interest: the appeal is to the instincts and the senses..."

Running at just 90 intermission-less minutes and opening to the sound of a series of gunshots and the sight of the protagonist clutching a smoking revolver over her dead lover's corpse, Teachout and Moravec's adaptation of W Somerset Maugham's 1927 play *The Letter* certainly assaults the senses. Based on a true-crime narrative about a woman who gets away with murder despite lying about her motives, *The Letter* enjoyed successful runs on Broadway and was adapted twice for the screen – most famously in a 1940 Bette Davis vehicle.

The Santa Fe re-telling, which stars James Maddalena as a conscience-stricken lawyer and a fiery Patricia Racette and brooding Anthony Michaels-Moore as an unhappy expatriate couple, Leslie

and Robert Crosbie, whose life in the jungle is torn by passion and violence, retains the melodrama while heightening the emotion.

Moravec's muscular score is as hammily reminiscent of 1940s film noir as the vampiric shadows of Duane Schuler's lighting design, with its use of swooping vocal lines, tremolo violins, shrill piccolos and heart-battering timpani. It nevertheless emphasises the high-stakes atmosphere, sometimes even undercutting the emotion. In a scene in Leslie's prison cell, for instance, a sweet harp and flute line ironically suggests innocence, before a flashback shows what really

happened on the night of the assassination.

The unexpected appearances of the ghost of Leslie's deceased lover contribute an arresting Grand Guignol tension.

Director Jonathan Kent's staging of Hammond's death in the opening beat misses a

prime opportunity for melodrama; it's obscured by flapping muslin curtains. And the production's intermittent set changes hamper the pace. Yet this steamy-sepulchral operatic potboiler holds the attention, and not simply by appealing to the senses. Far from being "void of intellectual interest", *The Letter* engages the brain with its seething study of the blurred lines between friendship and duty, love and madness, civilisation and savagery. ☉



Melodrama from Patricia Racette...



...and with Roger Honeywell, as doomed lovers in *The Letter*

Making music to
'help the Earth'
in Finland



Social themes in Finland

Erica Jeal visits an unusual festival in the woods

LAKE TUUSULA

Planes are taking off at Helsinki airport only 20 minutes away, but Ainola, the house on Lake Tuusula where Sibelius lived and died, is all tranquillity. Until, that is, you venture into the surrounding woodland, where three musicians are playing Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*. There's a violinist dressed as a spruce tree, a clarinetist in a toadstool costume, and an accordionist as a dapper devil in a two-foot-tall top hat. For once, one can safely describe a performance as unique.

Fans of the relentlessly individual 32-year-old Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto won't be surprised to hear that the man in the tree suit is him, and that the event – in a clearing surrounded by spider-like webs, woven by the artists Aamu Song and Johan Olin – is part of his own week-long music festival. The lakeside setting inspired Finland's most important artistic generation in the early 20th century, with painters including Eero Järnefelt and Pekka Halonen settling here. Their immaculately preserved traditional houses host some of the most intimate concerts.

The festival's Finnish title literally means "chamber music by Lake Tuusula", but the organisers prefer to translate it just as "Our Festival" – which anyway seems more appropriate given the music-camp atmosphere among the performers, who

are billeted together in a converted farmhouse. This year, pianist Bengt Forsberg was the most experienced of a line-up dominated by the cream of emerging Finnish players – all "Swiss Army knife musicians", as Kuusisto describes them, able to muck in and turn their hands to styles from Bach to Kuusisto's own arrangements of Joy Division.

Since Kuusisto took sole control of the festival's artistic direction in 2007 it has adopted an annual theme. This year's, "Help", saw each of the seven days presented together with a different NGO, including the WWF, UNICEF and Amnesty. The Ainola Forest concert was the first of three on a day backed by the Red Cross, focusing on the victims of war. It was followed by a programme in a deserted former barracks that ended with songs from Theresienstadt; then came a packed late-night concert featuring the Finnish pop singer Paula Vesala. With Kuusisto accompanying on harmonium, Vesala's reflections on the wartime memories of her grandmother were interspersed with the unsettling movements of George Crumb's quartet *Black Angels*.

Isn't it naive to expect audiences to take so many messages on board? "Probably," says Aleks Malmberg, the festival's organiser. "But if even one person does something good because of what she or he has heard, it's all one can ask. It doesn't have to change the world." ☺

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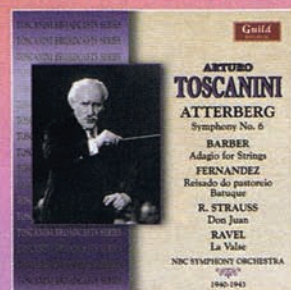
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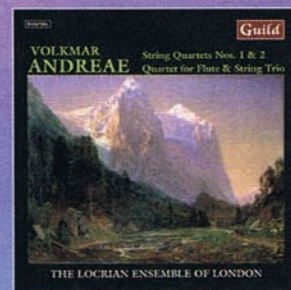
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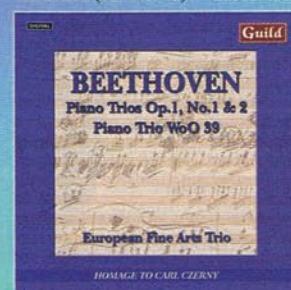
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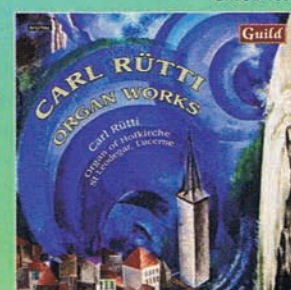
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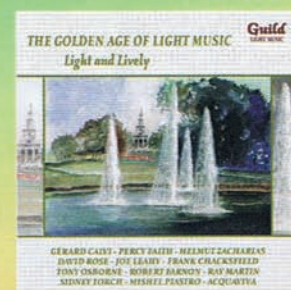
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The best events worldwide

Festivals continue apace in Swansea, Wexford and San Diego, Dudamel launches his directorship in LA and the New York Philharmonic tours Asia: the pick of October's performances from around the globe



28
SEPTEMBER

SWANSEA

Festival of Music and the Arts

The Swansea Festival takes place from September 28 to October 17 with performances from the Gabrieli Consort and Paul McCreech (above) in Haydn's *Creation*, the London Handel Players and soprano Emma Kirkby, Welsh National Opera, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra. Details: +44 (0)1792 411570 / www.swanseafestival.org

1
OCTOBER

DETROIT Orchestral Hall

Leonard Slatkin conducts the Detroit Symphony in Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and Piano Concerto, and Strauss's *Don Quixote*. Details: +1 313 576 5111 / www.detroitssymphony.com

2
OCTOBER

PADSTOW St Petroc's Church/ Prideaux Place

The inaugural Padstow Arts Festival runs from October 2 to 4 and celebrates the lives and works of former Padstow residents Sir Malcolm Arnold and Sir John Betjeman. Details: +44 (0)1841 533 449; (0)1841 533 776 / www.padstowartsfestival.com

2
OCTOBER

LEVOČA Music Festival

"Indian Summer in Levoča" takes place in the historic Slovakian town from October 2 to 10 with performances from the Stamic Quartet, Zemlinsky Quartet, Haydn Baryton Trio Budapest, Vienna Piano Trio and Slovak Sinfonietta. Details: info@lbfestival.eu / www.lbfestival.eu

2
OCTOBER

LEEDS Lieder +

The 2009 Leeds Lieder + festival runs from October 2 to 4 under director Julius Drake, with performances from soprano Joan Rodgers, mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn, tenor James Gilchrist and the Endellion String Quartet, plus special guest Dame Margaret Price. Details: +44 (0)113 222 3434 / www.leedslieder.org.uk

3
OCTOBER

PARIS Opéra Bastille

Paris Opera stages Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* conducted by Pinchas Steinberg on October 3, 9, 13, 16, 19, 22, 24 & 27. Details: +33 1 71 25 24 23 / www.operadeparis.fr

8
OCTOBER

LOS ANGELES

Walt Disney Concert Hall

Gustavo Dudamel (below) launches his inaugural season as music director of the LA Philharmonic with the world premiere of John Adams's *City Noir* and Mahler's Symphony No 1. Details: +1 323 850 2000 / www.laphil.com



8
OCTOBER

TOKYO Suntory Hall

The New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert kick off their Asian Horizons tour in Tokyo with Emanuel Ax in Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto on October 8 and Frank Peter Zimmermann in Brahms's Violin Concerto on October 9. Performances also take place in Seoul, Hanoi, Singapore and Abu Dhabi. Details: +1 212 875 5656 / nyphil.org

9
OCTOBER

MANCHESTER Bridgewater Hall

Douglas Boyd conducts the Manchester Camerata in Alwyn's *Autumn Legend*, Brahms's Piano Concerto No 1 with soloist Jonathan Biss and Beethoven's Symphony No 8. Details: +44 (0)161 907 9000 / www.manchestercamerata.co.uk

15
OCTOBER

LONDON Royal College of Music

English Touring Opera presents ETO Handelfest from October 15 to November 21, featuring five Handel operas in London, Malvern, Exeter, Bath, Aldeburgh and Cambridge. Details: +44 (0)20 7833 2555 / www.englishtouringopera.org.uk

16
OCTOBER

OXFORD Lieder Festival

The Oxford Lieder Festival takes place from October 16 to 31. Highlights include the complete Britten *Canticles* and Schubert cycles sung by Wolfgang Holzmair,

Christopher Maltman and James Gilchrist. Details: +44 (0)1865 305305 / www.oxfordlieder.co.uk



17
OCTOBER

LONDON Barbican

Bernard Haitink (above) conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in Schubert's Symphony No 5 and Mahler's 4th with Christine Schäfer. Details: +44 (0)20 7638 8891 / www.barbican.org.uk

18
OCTOBER

GLASGOW Royal Concert Hall

Valery Gergiev conducts the Mariinsky Orchestra in Dutilleux's *Correspondences* and Shostakovich's Symphony No 7, *Leningrad*. Details: +44 (0)141 353 8000 / www.glasgowconcert halls.com

18
OCTOBER

BEIJING

Forbidden City Concert Hall

The Sydney Symphony tours Asia from October 18 to 27, appearing in Shanghai, Macao, Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Kuala Lumpur. The first concert is in Beijing, led by Vladimir Ashkenazy. Details: +612 8215 4600 / www.sydneyssymphony.com

21
OCTOBER

WEXFORD Opera House

The 58th Wexford Festival Opera season runs from October 21 to November 1, featuring John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*; Donizetti's *Maria Padilla*; and a double-bill of Chabrier's *Une éducation manquée* and Rossini's *La cambiale di matrimonio*. Details: +353 5391 22144 / www.wexfordopera.com

26
OCTOBER

LONDON Westminster Cathedral

Pianist Stephen Hough gives a fundraising recital including Franck's *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* and Chopin's Piano Sonata No 3. Details: +44 (0)20 7798 9059 / www.westminstercathedral.org.uk

27
OCTOBER

SAN DIEGO

Athenaeum Music & Arts Library

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO BLU-RAY PLAYER

Etba soon

Another delayed BD machine, this one was first announced at the 2009 CES back in January, but has since been hit by supplier problems for the crucial transport mechanism. A redesign was needed, and the player is still "on the way".

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Onkyo's new A-5VL amplifier (top) and C-5VL SACD/CD player

A-5VL is also compatible with Onkyo's range of optional iPhone/iPod docks such as the £100 DS-A3.

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Designed to partner the A-5VL is the C-5VL SACD/CD player. It uses 192kHz/24-bit digital-to-analogue conversion from Wolfson, has DSD Bitstream support for

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Finally there's the entry-level A-9377 stereo amplifier. This delivers 2x90W, has defeatable tone and balance controls, a moving magnet phono input, pre-out terminals for adding extra power amps, headphone jack and remote control. Like the A-5VL, it's fully compatible with Onkyo's range of iPod docks.

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MARANTZ 6003 series CD player and amplifier now on sale

MARANTZ ALSO HAS new stereo components: the PM6003 amplifier and matching CD6003 CD player, at £299 apiece. Both have the company's M1 front panel and "reference standard" chassis design to bring them in line with the rest of the Marantz range.

The 2x45W PM6003 has six line-ins and a moving magnet phono stage, and uses a case-shielded toroidal transformer, an advanced power transistor for higher current and a new extruded aluminium heat sink. Remote control is also provided, with a system remote able to control other Marantz audio and AV components, as well as cabled remote control sockets.

The CD6003 CD player will handle CD and CD-R/RW discs as well as MP3 and WMA files, and has a USB socket on the front for portable media players. As well as allowing music to be played from memory devices, it also supports Apple iPods.

Inside, the engineers have added an oversized power supply to feed the player's digital and analogue circuitry, CS4398 DAC and Marantz's proprietary HDAM-SA2 amplifier modules.

NAD

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www.marantz.com

B&W develops tailored audio system for new Jaguar XJ luxury car

BRITISH SPEAKER COMPANY B&W has designed a custom speaker system for the new flagship Jaguar, the XJ. Each component is designed specifically for the car, and final tuning was done by the team behind the 800 series speakers, widely used in classical studios.

The installation has 20 speakers and 15 channels of amplification, offers Dolby Pro-Logic IIx/DTS Neo:6 processing, and uses Audyssey's MultEQ XT calibration system.

Bowers & Wilkins

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B&W speaker inside the new Jaguar XJ

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Online music's future

Yes, music downloading has gone respectable and moved away from its 'pirate' heritage – but is there an alternative to buying and storing?

THE DIGITAL BRITAIN report, outlining the Government's plans to make the UK a leader in the all-digital future, landed with a thump a few months back, and has been endlessly chewed over and digested in the past few months.

The headlines have been full of the promise of 2Mb broadband for all – only 2Mb? – a 50p-a-month levy on our telephone landlines to pay for it, and the possible end of

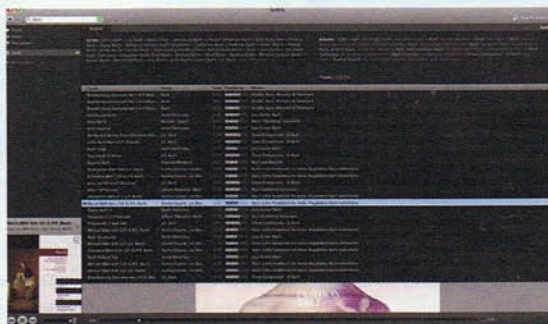
analogue radio as soon as 2015. But the report goes further, suggesting the future strategy for controlling the content we download, and how we can – and can't – copy and share it.

Stern penalties are said to be on the way for those file-sharing, up to and including cessation of internet service, and the intention is clearly that the only music or video files we will download in the future are those we're meant to, and from official sources.

That's all well and good, provided you want your music downloading to stay legal, but

there's one thing the report has overlooked: the digital music landscape is changing, led by teenage online users and the services catering for them, and music is increasingly being listened to online, not downloaded for storage and later consumption.

You can see why it's so attractive: rather than having to fill up a computer with music, back it up and copy it across to a portable device, the wider availability of broadband means that anything you



Spotify streaming: an alternative to downloads?

want to hear is available for instant streaming.

Services such as Spotify, at www.spotify.com, may seem to be aimed at the consumer of pop and rock music, but a simple search shows that there's much to offer the classical music listener, too. Even better, the basic Spotify service is free, supported by the advertising popping up from time to time, and runs at a reasonable enough 160kbps data-rate, good enough for casual or background listening.

However, pay £10 a month and you get advert-free music delivery at a rather more toothsome 320kbps – and it's at that point that the service becomes rather more attractive as a primary source of music.

Similarly, Classical Archives offers unlimited streaming at \$9.99 a month, or \$99.50 a year, at www.classicalarchives.com. There's even a 14-day free trial, and members can also buy and download any tracks or albums they want.

And such services aren't limited to audio downloads: the Plushmusic service, in beta form at the time of writing at www.plushmusic.tv, is streaming video performances, or can offer you complete works in HD for download. The 2007 Glyndebourne *Tristan und Isolde*, for example, is £24.99 or – should you wish – £9.99 an act.

Judging from the trailers available so far, the sound and video quality are excellent, making a solid case for streaming high-definition material over the internet.

It seems, therefore, that while the Digital Britain report should give us all faster web access, we may not be using it quite as the authors expect. After all, at the time of writing, Microsoft was planning a streaming service, designed to take on Spotify at its own game. ©

Infidelities



NHK shows how it's done with Blu-ray music

One of the industry figures I consider myself privileged to know is Sony's "Distinguished Chief Engineer", Takashi Kanai. He has, after all, played a major part in the development of CD and Super Audio CD hardware; he still tunes budget AV receivers with the kind of fanatical attention to detail usually reserved for high-end equipment; and he has the maddest listening room I have ever seen, with seven massive B&W 801 speakers – seven of them – crammed into a tiny space.

So when Kanai sends a disc over and suggests it might be well worth a play, I take notice.

And with his latest missive, I'm glad I did: it's a fabulous Blu-ray Disc release of Seiji Ozawa and the Saito Kinen orchestra playing Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Mahler's First, recorded live in Japan during concerts in 2007 and 2008.

Not only is this a superb demonstration disc, it also has fabulous performances, with spirited playing and a real sense of sheer enjoyment. Ozawa doesn't just bring the orchestra to its feet at the end of the Berlioz: he leaps into the thick of them, scattering the odd music stand and shaking each and every one by the hand.

There's a marked lack of showy camerawork, just razor-sharp 1080i pictures, and the sound – in Dolby 5.0 and five-channel LPCM – is exemplary. And who made this disc, at the time of writing only available in Japan? It's from the Japanese state broadcaster's NHK Enterprises – so how about it, BBC?

Finally I've found a good reason for Blu-ray Disc – just don't tell Kanai-san the machine I borrowed to try this release was a Panasonic!

Andrew Everard

Audio Editor

Not only is this a superb demo disc, it also has fabulous performances

Digital Britain at a glance

Faster broadband

The plan is for universal 2Mbps broadband access by 2012, using cable, copper wire and even satellite. Whether that will be fast enough if we're all streaming video and music is an entirely different matter.

50p-per-month landline levy

In order to help pay for this spread of broadband, the report proposes a levy on landline telephones of 50p a month. Just don't call it a tax...

Analogue radio switch-off

The report suggests this could happen as soon as the end of 2015, but before it can, some criteria regarding the availability of DAB services and the uptake of receivers have to be met. It's suggested this may happen by the end of 2013, after which a two-year switchover period will begin.

Re-allocation of FM spectrum

Once the national and local stations are all moved to DAB, it's suggested FM will be used for "ultra-local" and speciality radio stations.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 650C/650A

Affordable duo should tempt newcomers and upgraders alike

The new amplifier and player from a brand known for value won't disappoint, says Andrew Everard

The Cambridge Audio brand has long been one of the first ports of call for those seeking a high-quality system on a tight budget. It's been in existence since 1968, and while it has been through some turbulent times in the past, since it was taken over by the Audio Partnership it has established a winning modus operandi involving design here in the UK and manufacture in China. The company has a team of 20 engineers working in London, along with very close co-operation with those manufacturing facilities in China, right down to having its own quality control and engineering staff "on the ground" there, and its products are sold worldwide.

Its latest arrivals are pitched straight into the competitive sub-£500 stereo market. There's a new Azur 550 series, including the £280 550C CD player and £300 550A amplifier, and the 650 series we have here, at £330 for the 650C CD player and £350 for the 650A amplifier.

Immediately noticeable when unboxing these components is that there's nothing "budget" about the way they look or feel. This is now far from being a brand you buy because you can't afford anything better; this is a brand you choose.

Among the changes are a new wrapover case with a front panel made from thicker aluminium than in the past, dual-layer resonance-damping feet, upgraded controls and displays, and a proprietary isolated standby circuit, allowing the products to meet the EnergyStar requirement of less than 1W consumption in standby without any impact on the sound quality when in use.

The 650C CD player uses a new in-house-designed transport, rather than the DVD-ROM drives now common in CD players, and a



Cambridge Audio Azur 650A has a quality feel beyond its modest price, and sound to match

proprietary servo system, using a powerful processor to adjust the focus, tracking and output level of the laser in real time.

As in the servo section, double-sided surface-mount boards are used in the digital-to-analogue section, thus shortening signal paths, and the player uses twin Wolfson WM8740 DACs in differential configuration, coupled to an in-house Four Pole Dual Differential Double Virtual Earth Balanced filter. In simple terms, this gives two fully balanced outputs for each channel, which are summed in a filter stage. A further filter sums the balanced output of the earlier stages, creating a double-balanced filter for superior rejection of digital noise. You also get a choice of digital filter settings, offering fast or slow roll-off. It's worth experimenting with these settings for different systems and even recordings.

The partnering 650A amplifier offers 75W per channel into 8 ohms, and has six line outputs, although LP users will have to add on an external phono stage. There are pre-amplifier level outputs to allow connection to an external power amplifier or subwoofer, a front-panel input for MP3 players, speaker A/B selection, system control options and a new remote handset.

Under the lid, there's a new high-specification film-type "black box" volume potentiometer from ALPs, giving better tracking at low levels, and improved defeatable tone controls. The power amp stage benefits from new output devices for reduced thermal modulation and higher current delivery, and a substantial heatsink is fitted. Separate power supplies are used for the two power amplifier channels, right back to separate taps from the transformer and rectifiers.

The proprietary amplifier protection system has been retuned for better high-volume performance, the inputs are buffered for better stereo imaging, capacitors have been improved, with some custom-made for the amplifier, and there's an "audiophile" toroidal transformer.

PERFORMANCE

The smart new controls have a quality feel and precise action, and first impressions here are extremely impressive. You get a choice of black or silver finishes on the 650s, and both are executed to a very high standard, as well as allowing you to mix and match across the company's five Azur sub-ranges. Also worthy

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of note are the improved display on the CD player and the smooth, quiet operation of the disc drawer, while the slight mistracking of the volume control some users have experienced with Azur amps of the recent past, giving some balance shift at very low levels, is consigned to history.

Considering this amplifier and CD player together will leave you change from £700, and make possible a cost-effective £1000 stereo system when used with any one of a number of capable speakers at or around the £200-£250-per-pair mark, the standards of performance on offer here are entirely impressive.

Having tried the CD player and amplifier both separately and together, I'd have to say that the two really are designed to work as a duo: the player has a fast, dynamic and explicit sound some may find a bit too lively when used with a bass-light amplifier or speakers, but adding it to the 650A shows that there's no shortage of low-end substance or scale here, and gives a much more balanced result.

And all that digital engineering certainly seems to have paid off in the player. True, it can be rather revealing of the vagaries of recording or mastering, and it's not the most forgiving of machines, but provided the disc is up to the task, the controlled clarity on offer here is extremely attractive, not to mention remarkable for a player at this price. Again, some experimentation with the switchable digital filter is in order: with some brighter discs I found the sharp roll-off setting helpful, but in general I preferred the slow roll-off, which gives a slightly better sense of space. On any terms, however, the established competition in the sub-£500 sector is likely to be eyeing the Azur 650C warily.

The amplifier, meanwhile, proves itself to be a real powerhouse, more than capable of driving and controlling a wide range of speakers, from

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 650A

Type Stereo integrated amplifier

Price £350

Power output 75Wpc into 8 ohms

Inputs 5 line on rear panel, front-mounted 3.5mm stereo line-in

Outputs 2 tape out, pre-amplifier output, two pairs of speakers, headphones

Other connections System remote, infrared remote

Tone controls Yes, with bypass

Accessories supplied Navigator remote

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x12x35cm

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 650C

Type CD player

Price £330

Outputs Stereo line, electrical/optical digital

Other connections System remote, infrared remote

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43x8x30.5cm

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www.cambridgeaudio.com

the £200-ish standmount models with which it's likely to be used to some rather more ambitious – and demanding – designs. There's a fine sense of grip and control here, but at the same time the kind of authority and dynamic exuberance that sets the best amplifiers apart.

Those who prefer their music lush and reassuring, even if it means some attack and air goes missing along the way, may find the open and vibrant sound of the 650A a little too "full on", but partnered with some capable speakers and the 650C, it's impossible not to like the sheer detail and insight on offer here, along with the sense of rhythmic drive and rock-solid imaging.

As so many times before, the Cambridge Audio team has come up with a pairing not only offering remarkable value for money, but also with the wherewithal to challenge some rather more expensive rivals. This amp and CD player set the standard in this class, and should be on the "must listen" list for anyone planning an affordable system or upgrading from elderly components. **C**



CD player uses extensive in-house technology

SUPER AUDIO CORNER

Andrew Everard's verdict on some of the latest highest definition recordings

HAYDN - DIE SCHÖPFUNG



Matthews, Bostridge, Henschel; LSO and Chorus / Sir Colin Davis
LSO Live (B) ② LSO0628
Hybrid multichannel/stereo SACD

This October 2007 LSO Live recording, made in the Barbican Hall and engineered by Jonathan Stokes for Classic Sound, is a fine-sounding account of *The Creation*. It uses the SACD surround channels to give a subtle sense of space around the listener while keeping the focus firmly front and centre.

The sound stage is broad and deep, the chorus persuasively placed behind the band, and the soloists clearly brought forward without ever any sense of "spotlighting" in the mix. The overall sound is rich and warm but with a lovely sense of presence and – well – "liveness", and only the slightest hint of thickening of the mix when things get busy.

HANDEL - ORGAN CONCERTOS OP 7



Academy of Ancient Music / Richard Egarr
Harmonia Mundi (B) ② HMU80 7447/8
Hybrid multichannel/stereo SACD

This two-disc set of Handel's late organ concertos has a strangely detached sound, despite the vibrant presence of the orchestra throughout. There's nothing wrong with the way the orchestra is presented: the sound is dynamic and generally airy, although it can get rather dense at times. Of more concern is the balance between it and the solo instrument(s).

The organ sounds lovely when playing alone but is almost entirely subsumed by the orchestra elsewhere, and the relatively low levels at which it's recorded makes it sound rather feeble and recessed.

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YAMAHA PDX-50

Wireless speaker is a simple small-room solution

This Yamaha is smarter than the average iPod dock, says James Vesey

Yamaha is the latest company to make a major investment in iPod-based products, with two line-ups recently announced. There's a Desk Top Audio range of two clock-radio/iPod dock systems, one with a CD player built in, and two iPod speaker systems. The clock-radios have large real-wood top panels, and when you ask the Yamaha engineers why they're so large, they'll tell you it's because such units take up space on the bedside table, so they've provided a surface on which the user can put keys, small change, glasses and the like. Clever thinking...

The iPod dock systems are more conventional speaker set-ups: a connection for the iPod, a stereo amplifier and speakers built in. Except that only really covers the PDX-30; the £200 PDX-50 we have here is altogether smarter.

The connection between the iPod and the speaker system is wireless, using a small transmitter that clips to the portable player, making the iPod both the system's source and its remote control. You can control volume from the iPod, and when you turn the player off, the speaker system turns off too. Charging of the

transmitter – and a connected iPod – is supplied by a little ring-shaped stand into which the player end of things can be dropped when not in use. This has its own power supply.

So the player and its remote can sit on your coffee table, with the speaker system across the room, making a neat "hideaway" audio system.

And rather than using Bluetooth, as do some similar systems, Yamaha has employed its own AirWired lossless Linear PCM transmission system, this also having the benefit of virtually no latency, so you could even watch a concert on the iPod with the music playing from the speakers.

PERFORMANCE

Aside from the AirWired technology, the PDX-50 uses a 2x15W amplifier and decent-sized 8cm drive units in a sleek but substantial-feeling enclosure with reflex port bass-tuning for each channel. The transmitter module is compatible with fifth-generation iPods, the iPod Classic, iPod nano, iPod Touch, iPhone and iPhone 3G, and the transmission range is more than adequate for use in even the largest rooms. Finally, to ensure it matches your decor, the Yamaha system is available in a choice of four colours: black, grey, blue and pink.

And that's really all there is to this system: it's as simple as that, with the player/transmitter working with the speaker unit without any need for pairing, and operation being as simple as that of the player with which it's used.

The performance, meanwhile, goes a long way towards living up to Yamaha's claim of "Concert Quality Sound", being more than adequate to fill even quite large rooms without signs of strain, and having excellent detail and definition. I first heard this system in prototype form last year and was impressed; having used it at home, I reckon my initial impressions were correct. Of



iPod to speakers, no wires required

course, the quality of sound will depend to some extent on the standard of the files stored on the iPod, but the PDX-50 is more than capable of sounding very good even with uncompressed music while still flattering material stored at somewhat lower bit-rates.

The bass may be a little on the light side – Yamaha claims the system goes down to 60Hz, which sounds about right – but it's well defined and has good impact, while the mid-band and treble are clear and precise, and there's even a decent sense of stereo imaging, at least at relatively close listening distances.

More to the point, the Yamaha is one of the finest-sounding iPod speaker systems on the market, as well as one of the most convenient, and the company deserves praise for developing a product with so much convenience without any apparent performance penalty.

This is a persuasive system for the study, kitchen or smaller living-space, and the AirWired wireless connection is an integral part of its appeal, not a gimmick. Yamaha has clearly thought this system through very thoroughly, and the work has all paid off. **C**

YAMAHA PDX-50

Type Wireless iPod speaker system

Price £200

iPod compatibility Fifth-generation iPods, Classic, nano, Touch, iPhone/iPhone 3G

Wireless transmission Yamaha AirWired Linear PCM

Amplification 2x15W

Speaker drivers 8cm full range, with bass-reflex loading

Accessories supplied Wireless transmitter with charging station, two power supplies

Dimensions (main unit, WxHxD) 35x12.7x12.5cm

Made by Yamaha, Hamamatsu, Japan

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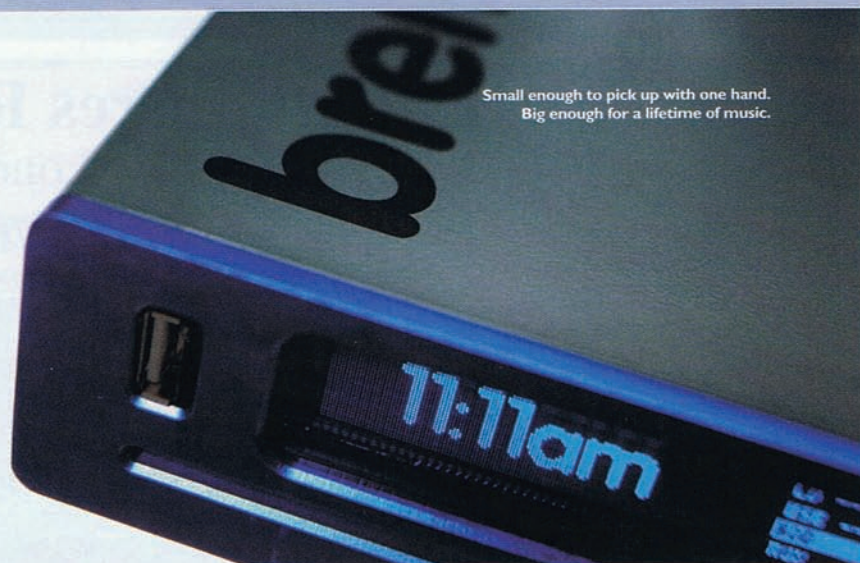
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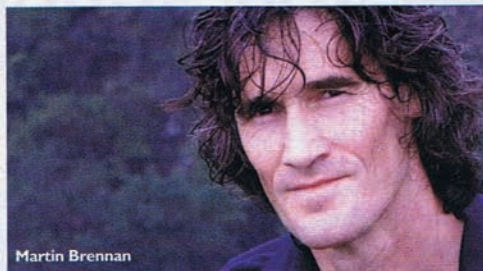
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What's the point in owning hundreds of CDs worth thousands of pounds if you never listen to them? The problem with CDs is that it's quicker to make a cup

of coffee than dip into a CD. Try timing how long it takes to pick a CD, load it in the CD player, play a snippet from a track or two, eject it and put it back where it came from. Then there is the problem of finding music. The print on a CD spine is tiny. What if the track is on a compilation CD? What if the CD is in the car? Then there is the clutter. You need to keep your CDs near the player or you won't play them. So you are forced to share your living space with hundreds of cheap plastic boxes.

CDs are great but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore - that's why Martin Brennan designed the Brennan JB7.

The face behind Brennan



Martin Brennan

Martin is a physicist and computer engineer. He has around twenty silicon chips to his name, written over a million lines of computer code and co-designed the world's first 64 bit games computer. "I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi changer. My second was a ten CD changer for the car. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. These players were fine but a bit clunky - there were several seconds of silence between CDs and in the car I could never find the right CD.

A few years ago I had a go at loading my cassette collection onto a PC. Cassettes were obsolete but I owned around 100 and the music on them reflected an important period in my life. I recorded all of the cassettes on to the PC over a period of several weeks. The thing is I never listened to the music on the PC. Somehow using the computer to listen to music never worked out. Maybe the computer was in the wrong place but I think it lacked the immediacy of a physical play button. In the end the computer got a virus and the music files were lost - I still had the cassettes thankfully. The JB7 is really my personal ideal music player".



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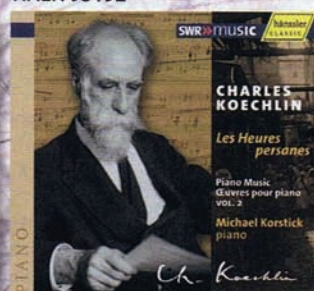
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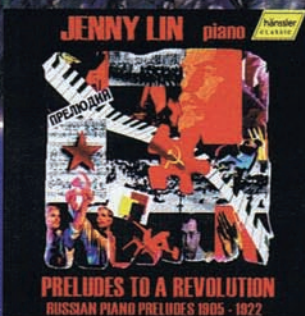
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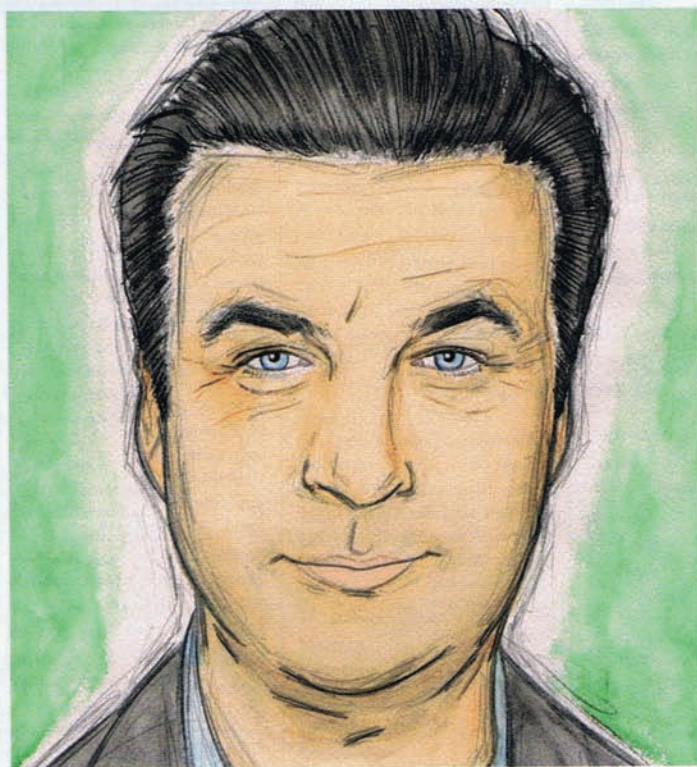
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I would speed-dial classical music radio stations, so I could ask exactly what I was listening to

Alec Baldwin

The actor lands his dream job, presenting a classical music radio show

I didn't fall in love with classical music until I was an adult. I had heard it as a child in school – back then, there was still exposure to classical music, even in a limited way, in the school system – but it didn't really do anything for me. It took me until much later to discover this entire, rich universe of music that now I really can't live without.

In 1982 I was working on a television show, a soap opera called *The Doctors*. They cued in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and it just slayed me. I turned to the casting director, Roger Sturtevant, and I asked him, "What music is that?" He looked at me really scornfully as if he couldn't believe I didn't know it already. I felt so stupid! So unfortunately, that first real experience for me was coloured by the arrogance that makes classical music so forbidding to lots of people, the "how can you not already know all of this?" pompousness.

Even so, I managed to find my way in, and classical music became an insatiable craving for me. I loathe and detest most pop music, and living in Los Angeles in the 1980s meant I spent a great

deal of time in isolation, driving in my car to this appointment and that. So it was in my car that I gained my musical education, listening to classical radio stations. I've become the kind of person who shows up late to appointments because I can't bear to turn off the car radio until I've heard the whole piece. For years, back in the days of car phones, I had the phone in my car programmed to speed-dial various classical music stations, so that I could ask them exactly what it was that I was just listening to, with all the recording information.

In all the travel I do these days, I still constantly comb the dial to find the local classical music station. Now, in the US, there are so many locations that don't have any radio stations dedicated to classical music, not even the public radio stations. It kills me.

From that first piece, *Symphonie fantastique*, I moved to Tchaikovsky

and Rachmaninov, pieces like the *Pathétique* Symphony and *The Isle of the Dead*. I still adore Romantic music, although within a few years of that discovery of Berlioz, I'd begun listening to Bach and Beethoven and many of the earlier masters.

However, Mahler is a great, great love of mine; his Ninth Symphony just stabs me right in the heart. The recent entire Mahler cycle at Carnegie Hall this past spring, with Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim splitting the conducting between them with the Staatskapelle Berlin, was momentous.

Over time, I began to develop a real fetish for hearing certain composers with very specific conductors

and orchestras. I craved Leonard Slatkin conducting Copland, Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat* conducted by Eduardo Mata, the Montreal Symphony and Charles Dutoit doing Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky. I fell in love

with Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony.

Our country could use its own soundtrack, our own musical narrative, right about now. I'd suggest Holst's *The Planets*. We've so completely obliterated our own landscape, and so completely embraced corporate identities rather than finding our own values, that we're going to need to go to a different planet and start over.

I've often thought that if I weren't acting, I'd really like to be a classical radio programme host. How much fun would that be! What I would play would depend on the time of day I was on. For the daytime? Copland, Wagner, Falla. For night, Mahler of course, but also a lot of piano music: Ravel, Rachmaninov, Debussy, Chopin, Satie. Someone at the New York Philharmonic read an interview with me in which I mentioned that idea a while back, and so now I am involved in classical music radio: starting this fall, I'm hosting the orchestra's weekly radio broadcasts, which is an amazing honour. 🎧

Alec Baldwin's NYPO US radio broadcasts start on Sept 30

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